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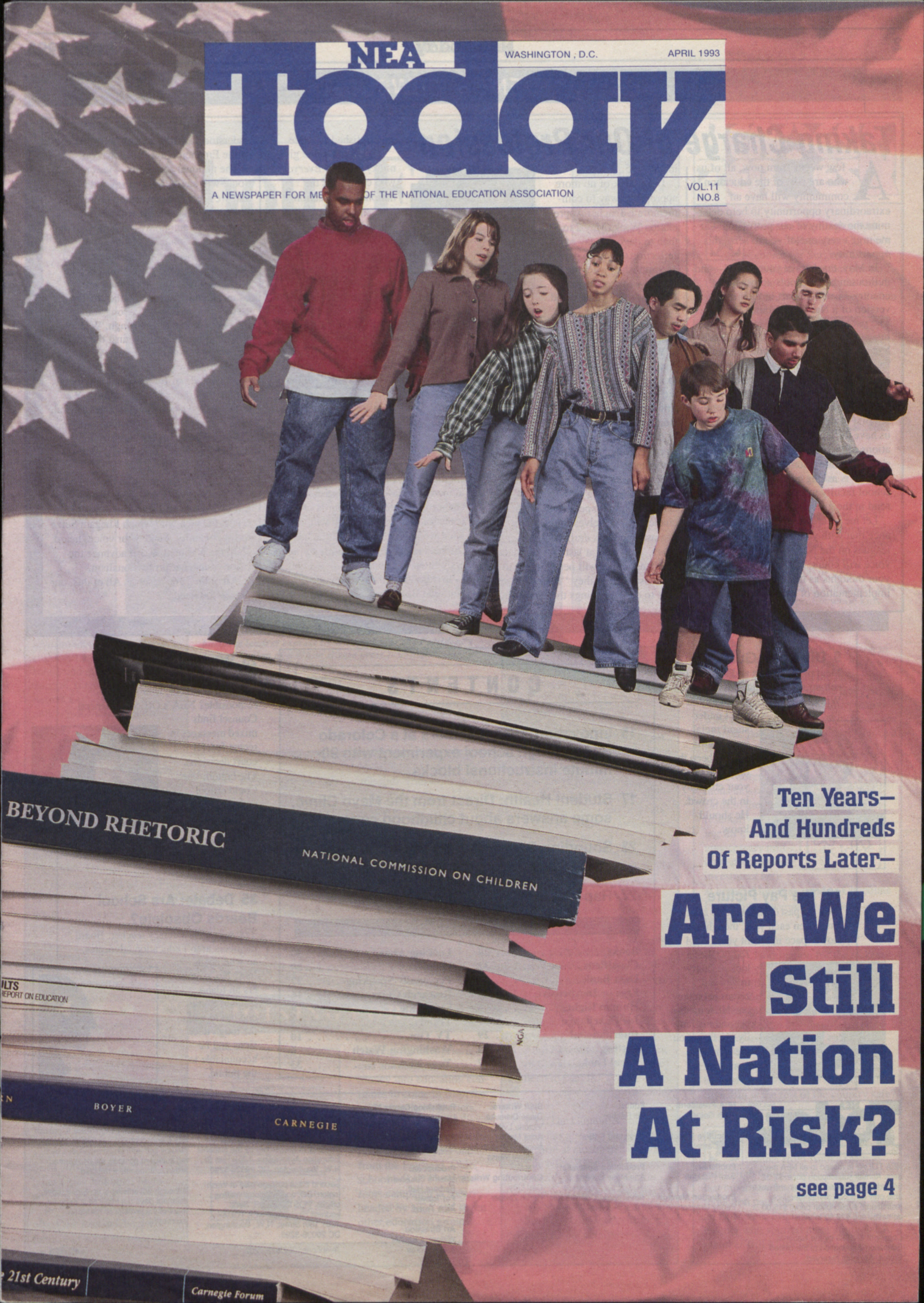

Ten Years—
And Hundreds
Of Reports Later—

Are We Still A Nation At Risk?

see page 4

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Taking Charge of Our Profession

A few weeks from now, all of us who are part of the education community will have an extraordinary opportunity to help determine the destiny of our profession. Let me urge every one of you to seize this opportunity.

In May, teachers at your school—and in thousands of schools across the country—can take part in their own version of a National Faculty Meeting. The purpose: to sit down and exchange insights on just what constitutes excellent teaching. In other words, the agenda for the National Faculty Meeting consists of one critical question: What makes a great teacher?

The purpose of this National Meeting, the first of its kind, is to make sure all of us have the chance to impact the deliberations of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). NBPTS is asking each participating school faculty to appoint a recorder and send in the group's ideas.

Let me offer you my personal assurance that with your Association colleagues on the National Board, your voice *will* count. NBPTS will review your thoughts as it moves toward implementation of national certification in 1994-95.

I can think of no more appropriate way to commemorate Teacher Appreciation Week (May 2 to 8) than to devote a day of reflection to how to define accomplished teaching and how to recognize it. But don't feel constrained by these dates: *You* select the day and time, that's best for your school.

NEA President
Keith Geiger

What is at stake as the National Board prepares to issue the first certificates recognizing the expertise of veteran classroom practitioners? A great deal. Since 1987, the Board has moved steadily and prudently to devise a system of voluntary professional certification that will improve teaching as well as to bolster public support for teachers and schools.

Now, beginning with the 1994-95 academic year, experienced teachers can challenge themselves by going up against standards *designed by their peers*. They will at last have in place a mechanism that will permit them to demonstrate that they "know and are able to do" the things that make for accomplished practice.

This is not some gimmicky contest. *Everyone* who completes the national certification assessment process—whether they pass or not—will be able to say to the world, "I am a better teacher today than when I started down this road." This is the way it must be. If the process fails to work in this way, it is quite simply the wrong process.

If we insist on this understanding, national certification will send a strong signal to the American public. The teachers of America will be visibly dedicated to a comprehensive strategy that protects the integrity, enhances the esteem, and improves the quality of their profession.

National certification will offer teachers themselves—like their counterparts in medicine, law, and architecture—the chance to define the standards of excellence for their profession. It will grant us what we have long deserved: a board *of* teachers to approve standards *for* teachers written *by* teachers.

In this sense, the document the National Board produces might best be understood as the educator's equivalent of the Emancipation Proclamation.

The national standards—*our* creation—will say to all, and say with force, that we are a self-governing profession. The national standards will amount to a statement of autonomy—a statement that henceforth we intend to tolerate no outside imposition, no infringement of our right to define professional accomplishment, no holier-than-thou pronouncements by those on the sidelines.

This is a goal we have long sought. At times the going's been rough. We have struggled for decades against the regimentation of our profession. We have fought to stem a rising tide of regulation that insulted our professional judgment and damaged our public standing. We have worked hard to develop the research base that undergirds the science and the artistry of teaching. In sum, we have worked to create a recognized profession where none existed.

Today, this goal is within reach. That is why the National Faculty Meeting will be a watershed event. And that is why I repeat the plea with which I began: Seize the opportunity. Make your voices heard. Help the National Board advance the cause of teacher professionalism.

All of this, you deserve. All of this, our profession needs.

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Meet psychologist and school consultant on multiculturalism Derald Wing Sue, who argues that you can't understand racial issues until you've been the only one of your ethnicity in the crowd. He should know.

12 The Pay Picture

Over the past decade teacher salaries have risen each year, though at a slower pace in recent years. *NEA Today* takes a look at salary trends and zeroes in on how one NEA member and his family are faring on the economic front.

25 Who's Liable?

When kids get hurt or sexually molested at school, who's legally responsible? NEA's Office of General Counsel finds mixed messages in recent federal court decisions. The bottom line: Could school authorities have stopped it?

35 Debate: Are School Boards Obsolete?

Yes, says a New Jersey teacher: Board members aren't education advocates, so who needs 'em? No, counters an Idaho teacher: Someone has to make the tough decisions and be accountable to the public.

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NATIONAL NEWS

About Face!

The White House

NEA President Keith Geiger (at left) and other labor and business leaders express their support for the President's economic plan at a White House press briefing.

Clinton's economic plan reverses federal budget priorities of the past 12 years.

At last: a President who believes the nation's children are important—for themselves now and for their impact on the nation's economic health when they grow up.

In February President Bill Clinton revealed his pro-youth priorities in the five-year federal budget he outlined to Congress.

Educators should like the Clinton economic plan for two main reasons. First, it includes significant new investment to make American children healthier, better educated, and more productive. Second, it reduces the federal deficit, essential for the nation's economic health.

"The ability of education programs to get the resources they need to be successful—from federal, state, and local sources—depends on economic vitality," explains NEA Government Relations Director Debra DeLee.

"By addressing the deficit and investing in jobs and infrastructure, the President's plan will help meet those needs," she adds.

One way to look at the President's investment program for children and youth is to divide it between the short-term—the part included in the so-called economic stimulus package—and the long-term.

The stimulus package consists of $30 billion in education and other infrastructure initiatives timed to occur this year to boost the economic recovery.

The programs aimed at children and youth include—

► $2 billion to retire the deficit in the Pell grant program for college students.

► $500 million for a Chapter 1 summer program to employ up to 63,000 teachers and classroom aides to serve up to 700,000 students in inner cities and other high-poverty areas.

► $235 million to partially offset the loss in Chapter 1 funds that some districts will experience because of the shift from 1980 to 1990 census data in fund allocation. This appropriation will prevent the loss of up to 8,000 teaching positions and services to 250,000 students.

► $1 billion for the Labor Department's Summer Youth Employment and Training Program.

► $500 million for a Head Start summer program.

► $300 million to ensure that all infants receive necessary vaccinations.

The longer-term investments (listed below) provide new money in increasing annual increments so full funding is achieved a few years down the road. The amounts below are new money above the anticipated rate of inflation.

► $3.1 billion by 1997 for Department of Education programs for education reform and restructuring, safe schools, and improved access to postsecondary education.

► $3.1 billion by 1997 for Head Start to serve all eligible children.

► $984 million to fully fund the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

► $4.1 billion for worker retraining and $500 million for youth apprenticeships by 1997.

► $3 billion for a National Service program by 1997.

The President's ability to get his economic program passed in anything like its original form is by no means assured, however.

Attacks on the stimulus package and suggestions for additional spending cuts and tax increases are coming from many sources—in Congress and out.

But the President is standing firm for education. And NEA members are standing firm behind the President. NEA Congressional Contact team members came to Washington right after the economic speech to express their support for the President's plan on Capitol Hill—and to meet the new freshmen members of Congress at a reception NEA hosted.

"For education to keep its top priority status," says NEA's DeLee, "the Clinton plan must succeed. So we're working hard to help the Administration and our allies in Congress get the votes they need to pass it."

—Nancy R. Needham

FYI: The Clinton Administration has also put health care reform at the top of its agenda. The NEA Board of Directors recently adopted a position statement listing the characteristics of a health reform plan the NEA could support. See page 33 for details.

JOINING FORCES

Support for new priorities and an infusion of new money into education continues to come in from the nation's school districts. Thousands of school boards have sent in resolutions similar to this one from the Fairfield, Ohio, school board. The grassroots campaign is spearheaded by NEA and seven other education groups.

HEROES & ZEROES

A warm Washington welcome to President Clinton's choice for Surgeon General, Dr. Joycelyn Elders. Number one on Elders' "to do" list: reduce the teen pregnancy rate. A pediatrician and often controversial state health chief in Arkansas, Elders supports school-based health clinics and other preventive health services for kids. "You can't educate children if they're not healthy, and you can't keep them healthy if they're not educated." Not much to argue about so far.

Ouch! The price tag for all the vaccines recommended for a two-year-old increased nearly tenfold over 10 years—from $20 in 1982 to nearly $200 in 1992. A (small) pox on the drug companies that have gotten fat on profits while kids have been dying of measles.

Want a no-calorie reason to love Ben and Jerry? A few months ago, the ice cream makers teamed up with The Body Shop, Just Desserts, and other stores nationwide to tell Congress to get its priorities straight. As part of a February "Have a Heart" campaign, customers at the stores sent thousands of postcards to their representatives asking for cuts in unnecessary military spending and investment here at home. Almost as good as Chocolate Fudge Brownie—and a lot less fattening.

Nomination for the sickest gimmick of all time goes to the Taiwanese firm marketing "syringe pencils." These "toys" are clear plastic replicas of hypodermic syringes, except the needle is a pencil lead and the contents are colored liquids. Kids use them to "play" at shooting up. San Jose officials recently banned the manufacture or sale of the toys. But is the rest of the country safe?

Supplemental appropriations (cash prizes) to the four students from Anoka (Minnesota) High who came to Washington last month to share their own deficit reduction package with Congress. And an Economic-Stimulus-Award to the teacher who spurred them along, NEA member Bill Mittlefehldt.

COVER STORY

10 Years Later

Are We Still A

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre education performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."
—A Nation At Risk
April 1983

This sentence—and the landmark report it introduced—may well have pushed a nation down the long road to education reform. Where are we now? On these pages, a few facts and a few opinions to spark your thinking.

The Revolution's Here

Jon Lakey

So much has improved here, I don't know where to start. Ten years ago, too many kids were sitting at desks churning out tons of worksheets. Now we're into math manipulatives, writing centers, whole language.

We're working to help children succeed and graduate now. It's not "three grammatical errors and you fail" anymore. Kids get second and third chances, more individualized instruction. The old "memorize and regurgitate" is out, and cooperative learning and higher order thinking skills are in.

We've got new programs for 4-year-olds here. We've got a peer helper program. We've got a tremendous dropout prevention and drug abuse education effort going. We've got new computers, more parent involvement, elementary counselors.

Our principal was hired by a "management team" of teachers selected by the faculty. There's a new atmosphere—administrators aren't trying to catch us being bad, but to help us be good. Our inservice program is much stronger now.

And we're getting better. We're not satisfied to continue to use dog-eared lesson plans. We're working together more, rewriting curriculum. Nobody thinks they have all the "right" answers anymore, so we're not afraid to ask for help here or on PSInet [NEA's computer network for innovative schools].

Being involved with NEA's Learning Lab has revitalized my interest in education. It has tripped buttons and triggers that I haven't felt since college.

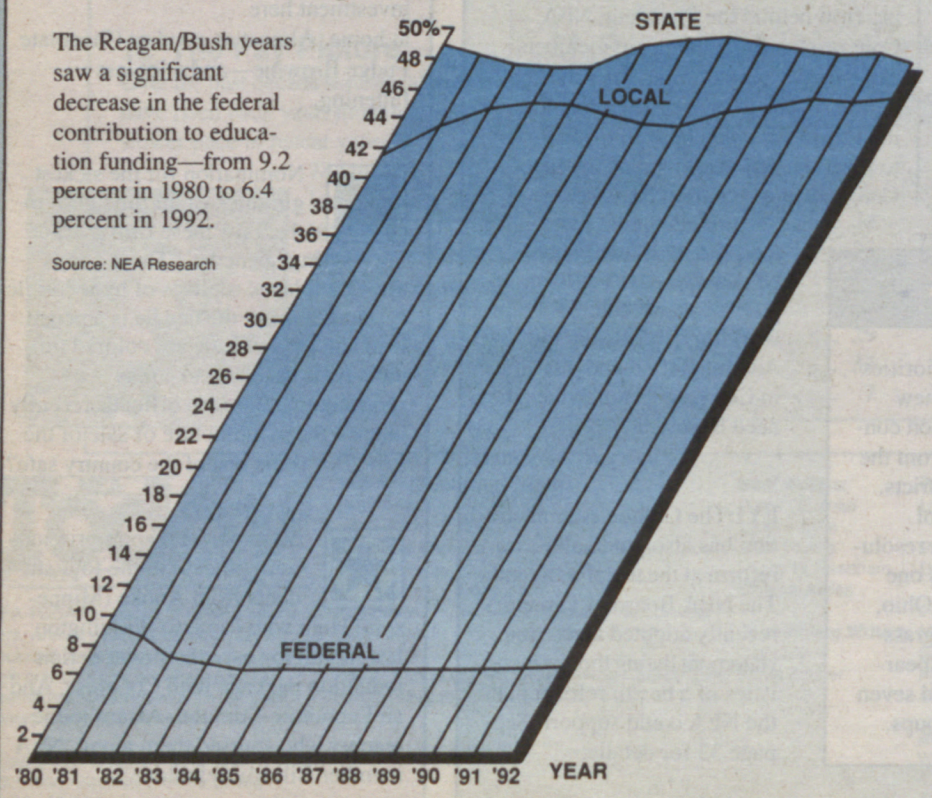
Now, more than ever before, I feel I have a responsibility to provide a good product, to be sure that the taxpayers have gotten their money's worth. And the more I'm supported and encouraged, the harder I want to work to do a good job.

Marilyn Routh, a counselor at McCrary Elementary School in Asheboro, North Carolina, has been an educator for 24 years. Asheboro is one of NEA's 20 Learning Lab districts.

The Shrinking Federal Role

The Reagan/Bush years saw a significant decrease in the federal contribution to education funding—from 9.2 percent in 1980 to 6.4 percent in 1992.

Source: NEA Research



Q & A

Are we winning the war against mediocrity?* NEA Today *put that question to five who have their eyes on the prize—in this case, quality education for all.

Impact Visuals

Anne Lieberman

Co-director, National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, Teacher's College, Columbia University

We're seeing some pockets of brilliance out there, but on a scale of 1 to 10, I think we're at 2. Still, I'm very hopeful. Yes, there are a lot of problems, but people are far more up for turning those problems into opportunities.

Peter Glass

LeRoy Hay

1983 Teacher of the Year; Superintendent, Windsor Locks, Connecticut

We've weakened the school system by asking it to be the answer to all the problems of society. Every time we've added something to the schools, we've taken away from the traditional curriculum. We've asked teachers to be all things, and they can't be.

COVER STORY

Nation at Risk?

Reform? What Reform?

Bob Riha, Jr.

My mother was a teacher. She said every five years there was a new "something." Well, since *A Nation at Risk* 10 years ago, I've seen a big flurry of paperwork about reform, but as far as the actual classroom goes, I don't see a lot of change. In fact, there's been a change for the worse. They've cut the school budget so close to the bone here, I don't have enough chairs for my students.

I've always thought of education as a table with four legs. For students to be successfully educated, they need a strong education institution, parents who are supportive and nurturing, a moral foundation taught at home and reinforced by church and school, and funding—you do need money.

But the way education is going now, it's like a one-legged table. We do have supportive parents, but society is asking too much of us. L.A. is a city on the edge, and our schools just can't do everything.

Even if there was a 100 percent improvement in K-12 education, we'd still be losing the war here. The price of college—even junior college—has increased so significantly that kids with potential are giving up.

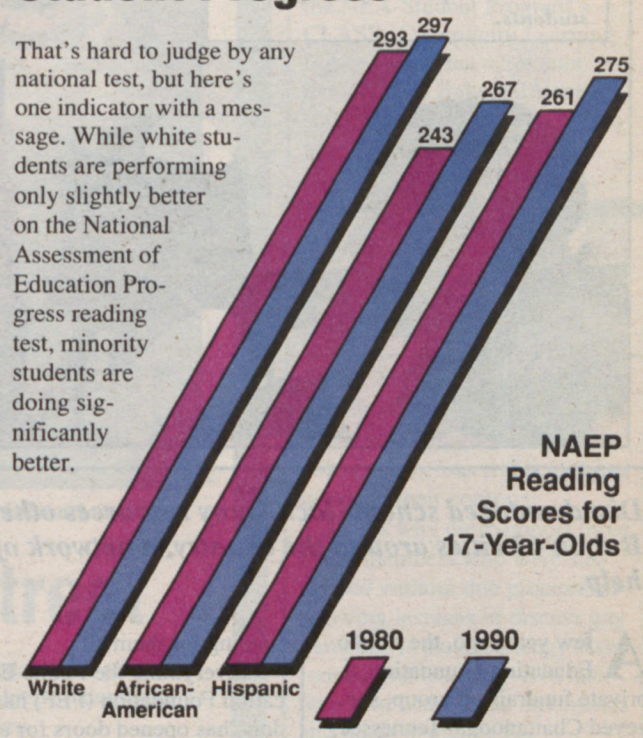
I feel that public education is under attack, and the politicians in power who could do something about it, don't. Some people feel that the way to address the problem is to get rid of the public schools.

But if I could have my way, I would create public schools where students would have hands-on learning, parents would be actively involved, students would come to school well-fed and well-groomed, knowing what's right and wrong. Teachers would have input into how the school runs, we'd have technology available, including phones in our classrooms, paid planning time, fair salaries, offices to meet parents in. It's been 10 years. None of these things has happened yet.

Lisa Jeffery teaches music and coordinates the magnet program at the Westside Alternative School in Los Angeles.

Student Progress

That's hard to judge by any national test, but here's one indicator with a message. While white students are performing only slightly better on the National Assessment of Education Progress reading test, minority students are doing significantly better.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in Academic Progress*, 1991

Can You Lingo?

Over the past 10 years, the following words and phrases have jumped—or been pushed—to the fore of the school reform movement. How many do you use?

teacher empowerment
site-based decision making
school-based management
shared decision making
ungraded primary
mentors/mentoring
lead teachers
paradigm
restructuring
school transformation
national certification
heterogeneous grouping
cooperative learning
authentic assessment
performance assessment
decentralization
whole language
outcome-based education
interdisciplinary
top down/bottom up
rapporteur
vision
collaboration
stakeholders
school improvement team
systemic process/product
action research
student portfolios
total quality management

Greg Anrig

President, Educational Testing Service

In my field there are very positive things happening. The shift toward performance assessment is particularly useful on an instructional level. On the down side, we're still doing too much testing. If we took that time and money and invested it in academic work, students would be better off.

Joe Di Dio

Sharon Robinson

Director, NEA Center for Innovation

We're past the 'silver bullet' stage, where we thought any one thing would make all the difference. We have a broad consensus that systemic school change is needed. We have concrete examples to look at, a school change movement underway. That's phenomenal learning in 10 years.

Eva Baker

Director, Center for the Study of Evaluation; Professor, UCLA Graduate School of Education

We've made the most progress in moving toward a shared vision about education reform and change. People now have the sense that the problem is complicated, and you can't fix it by coming up with new standards or assessments or teacher training. Things have to happen together.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Private Foundations Lend Kids a Helping Hand

Chattanooga, Tennessee, teacher Judy Sivils says project money from the Chattanooga's Public Education Fund helps both faculty and students.

John Coniglio

Disadvantaged schools lack many resources other schools take for granted. But, in 63 cities around the country, a network of private funders steps in to help.

A few years ago, the Public Education Foundation, a private fundraising group, surveyed Chattanooga, Tennessee, teachers. The question: "What do you need to achieve the greatest degree of effectiveness and satisfaction?"

Their answer: shared decision-making, a collegial environment, sensitivity in dealing with diversity, and continuing intellectual development.

PEF went to work. It got teachers involved in developing skill training programs and in-service sessions for staff. Now 95 percent of Chattanooga schools participate in an intensive staff development program.

PEF established ways teachers could learn from each other. Third grade teacher Judy Sivils is chair of the peer-coaching committee that allows colleagues to visit, observe, and critique each other's classes. "Peer coaching," she explains, "provides a support group for trying new techniques without the threat of a formal evaluation."

PEF paid for release time. Plus, they published a teachers' guide to getting grants and using community/ university resources. They awarded teachers $1,000 grants to pursue their intellectual interests. They created summer geography institutes and enrichment programs, an intergenerational tutoring program, and numerous other special projects. And helped provide funding for them all.

"Everything the Public Education Foundation (PEF) has done has opened doors for educators and for students," says Sivils.

Chattanooga's Public Education Foundation is a member of the Public Education Fund Network (PEFNet)—an association of 65 independent, privately-supported education funds. Serving 5.2 million children in 26 states, PEFNet promotes major public school innovations in communities with disadvantaged and minority students.

Almost all PEFNet members sponsor teacher mini-grants, teacher development programs, and curriculum initiatives—all tailored to the particular needs of their communities.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, another PEFNet member—the 10-year old Alliance for Education—has taken a different approach to supporting teachers. When the local school district became too financially strapped to have in-service programs, it created a teacher development program.

With teacher input, the Alliance developed a Teachers' Roundtable, a series of workshops and lectures given by area professors and community experts. The Roundtable is now so over-subscribed that teachers must limit their choices to three sessions per semester.

Like other PEFNet members, the Alliance is independent of the school district. It succeeded in winning a three-year, $150,000 grant from a local trust fund to create an extensive Professional Development Institute for Worcester educators.

Worcester elementary science facilitator Patrick DeSantis from Chandler Magnet School attests to the quality of Alliance programs.

"We met with higher education faculty and business leaders to develop state-of-the-art courses. We've found the entire process very professional and well thought-out."

With the Alliance serving as a matchmaker, each Worcester school has a unique business-school relationship. Education Association of Worcester President Edmund McGovern explains, "Business in our community really understands that they have to help us."

Around the country, PEFNet members encourage business involvement and reach out for broad-based community support of public education issues. Their goal: to become catalysts for genuine public school reform by building real collaboration among all of education's stakeholders.

For further information contact: Public Education Fund Network, 601 13th Street, N.W., Suite 370 South, Washington, D.C. 20005-3808, 202/628-7460.

—Melissa Etlin
NEA Human and Civil Rights

WASHINGTON WATCH

Eli Segal directs President Clinton's new national service initiative. Its main components: opportunities for young people to serve their country and in return to receive money for college or to pay back student loans.

Best Win For Education Employees

Education supporters came out as winners when President Clinton announced his economic stimulus package. The package—which Congress will debate, perhaps alter, and hopefully pass— includes a fully funded Head Start Program by 1998, $9.8 billion for new education reform initiatives, $9.2 billion for a national service plan, $2 billion for Pell Grants, and $500 million for summer Chapter 1.

One To Watch

Help may be on the way for students who don't intend to go to college. Look for news of a joint effort by Labor Secretary Robert Reich and Education Secretary Richard Riley to develop an important new school-to-work transition program.

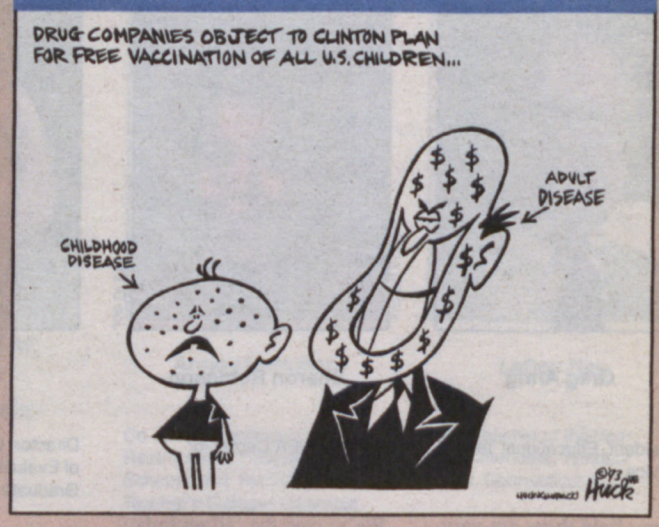
And What You Can Do

You can help stop school violence by writing your U.S. Representative in support of Rep. Jose Serano's (D-NY) Classroom Safety Act, H.R. 538.

The bill would create a competitive grant program funded at $100 million a year.

Schools could apply for grants to help pay for locally-designed programs to curb violence including mediation efforts, counseling programs, anti-gang activities, even metal detectors and other school security equipment.

Political Cartoon of the Month



Congressional Quote of the Month

Fact: Over 70,000 classrooms have unsafe levels of cancer-causing radon.

"It may be more dangerous to attend school than it is to work in a nuclear power plant."

—Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)

Local Look

MICHIGAN

No Money, No School

You're going to hear more about Kalkaska.

At press time, school employees in this rural school district of 2,300 students were poised to take a tough stand in favor of quality education and against the state's school funding formula.

When the school district runs out of money in late March, they will not borrow more. They will not slash their programs. They will simply close their doors for the year.

"I am definitely, firmly behind the school board on this," notes Rik Ponstein, president of the Kalkaska Education Association. "We have a good school district and a good staff. We're very proud of it. There is nothing I think we should cut."

Kalkaska's bus drivers, custodians, and paraprofessionals—members of NEA-affiliated Kalkaska ESP—agree.

Kalkaska's predominantly low-income voters have one last chance to keep schools open, but they must pass a millage vote to raise local taxes. Two previous millage votes were overwhelmingly defeated.

MISSISSIPPI

Tupelo Trendsetters

The 175 members of the Tupelo Association of Educators (TAE) are actively involved in the restructuring taking place within their district.

Hoping to improve their effectiveness as teachers, TAE members have thrown away their textbooks and developed more holistic methods, including nongrading and multi-age instruction.

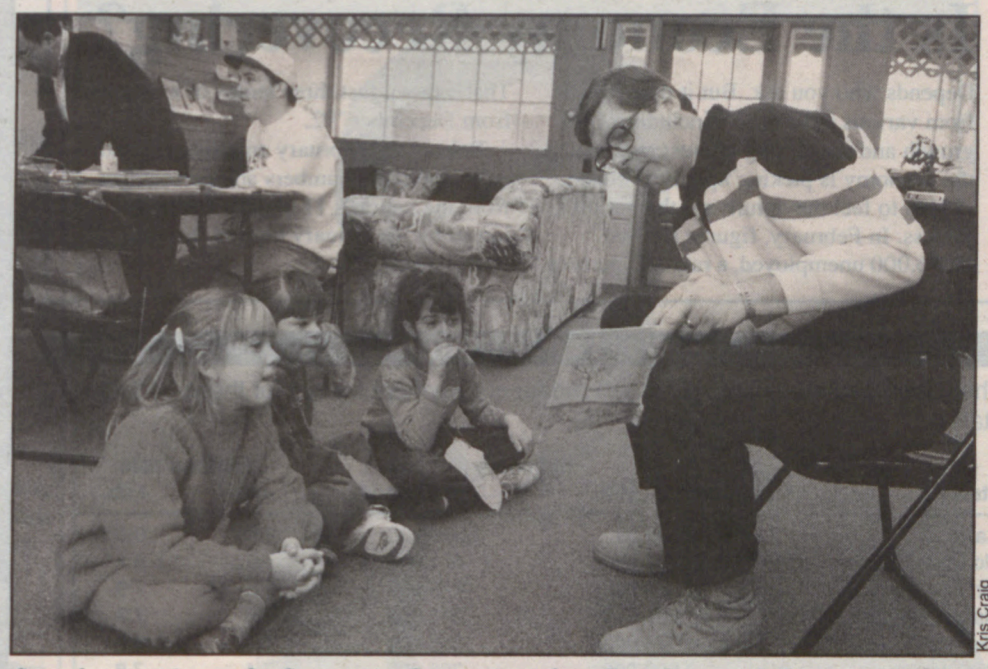
The district has also joined with the business community to bring total quality management (TQM) to the educational system. Teachers, administrators, and community members are working together to make decisions on the schools' curriculum, policies like discipline, and the district budget.

Over the last three years, with grant money from L. D. Hancock and other corporations, TAE members have been part of a cadre of 300 district teachers who travel all over the U.S. visiting schools to observe new instructional techniques.

Says TAE President Janet Violette, "The Association is pleased that our members have this positive relationship and involvement with the district. Unfortunately, most Mississippi teachers do not have the opportunity to be in on the decision-making process.

"Perhaps," she adds, "we can serve as trendsetters statewide."

IN EAST GREENWICH, RHODE ISLAND



Kris Craig

Saturday morning at the Community Connection where East Greenwich Education Association President Ray Pouliot reads along with kids.

Rendezvous on Main Street

Walk into 264 Main Street on a Saturday morning and you'll find a dozen or so primary schoolers listening to a story and making projects with construction paper.

Come in on Sunday afternoon, and you may meet members of the school board and town council—or Chamber of Commerce colleagues of the East Greenwich Teachers Community Connection.

The East Greenwich Education Association set up the Connection in a former gift shop last November, during bitter contract negotiations. They simply moved in folding chairs and tables and went to work.

Now, with help from NEA and NEA-Rhode Island, the Community Connection is firmly established. In the store itself, a sofa and love seat make one corner comfortable for small discussions. An office at the back houses a computer and a refrigerator given by an EGEA member. And, as a Main Street operation, the Connection has joined the Chamber of Commerce.

The Connection has hosted meetings between teachers and parents and a Lunch with Santa put on by students for youngsters from needy families. At Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Valentine's Day, it's been an organizing point for food baskets for the needy.

In February the Connection was the site of the Rhode Island Distinguished Art Exhibit, sponsored by the state's Department of Education. In March teachers helped students prepare for the SAT exams here.

It's also a site for local, area, and state Association meetings. "NEA-Rhode Island is like a big family," says EGEA President Ray Pouliot. "When they saw us in trouble with our negotiations last fall, everyone rallied round us right away."

Other Rhode Island locals have sent EGEA about $3,500 to keep the Connection in operation. So far, says Pouliot, about 40 EGEA members, about one in five, have taken part in one or another of the Center's activities. EGEA's five-member Public Awareness Project, formed during negotiations last fall, keeps things moving.

Coming up: babysitting workshops for teenagers, before summer vacation. A CPR course. Maybe a tutorial center. Maybe a junior Great Books program. There seems to be no limit to the possibilities.

"Last fall some of us decided we had to change our image," explains Pouliot, "to let people see that we're a part of the community and we have something to give. We had to go out and advocate for the schools."

And on a personal note, "I've been teaching 23 years," says Pouliot, a high school social studies teacher. "I've got some years left, and I want to make those years worthwhile."

VIRGINIA

Learning Literacy

When a parent can't read, helping a child prepare for school may seem an intimidating task. But in the rural areas of Montgomery and Floyd counties, a parental involvement project led by student and active members of NEA is helping children and parents—together.

The Virginia Tech Student VEA, together with the Montgomery Classroom Teacher Association and the Floyd County Classroom Teachers Association, have created "Project Assist," a literacy and parental involvement program.

"Project Assist" provides mentors and tutors for K-2 students in this isolated rural region, where illiteracy rates exceed 40 percent among adults.

The project is funded through the NEA-Student Program's CLASS (Community Learning through America's Schools) project. CLASS links NEA active and student Associations in projects that help children.

IDAHO

Teacher Rights: Not Mere Words

To the 450 members of the Meridian Education Association, due process and academic freedom are precious rights, not just words in their contract.

That's why they support three MEA members who were suspended without due process for allowing lesbians to discuss gay parenting in their sociology classrooms. The teachers were later reinstated with formal reprimands and made to apologize.

MEA members have unanimously passed a vote of no confidence in the school board and contributed more than $1,200 to finance the printing of leaflets, fliers, and newspaper ads that tell the public the full story.

Meridian's brouhaha started with a parent complaint and escalated into a major controversy. Although the teachers had followed correct procedures, a school board member took matters into his own hands.

He conferred with other board members and—ignoring a due process procedure spelled out in the teachers' contract—ordered the three suspended.

OKLAHOMA

Bearly There

Members of the Professional Educators Association of Lawton recently donated 20 stuffed bears to a local ambulance service for emergency crews to use when responding to calls involving children.

Explains PEAL president Barbara Meyers: "We decided if we couldn't be there when our students needed us, then our teddy bears could be."

The teddy bear project, adapted from one in Texas, is one of several projects to enhance PEAL's image and increase its visibility in the community.

State Side

MARYLAND

Honoring African Americans

What do Frederick Douglass, Billie Holiday, Thurgood Marshall, and Matthew Henson have in common?

Their photos are on cards celebrating famous African Americans from Maryland. The cards, designed and distributed by the Maryland State Teachers Association, have become wildly popular in the state.

The 1993 set of 12 cards—honoring Douglass, arctic explorer Henson, Baltimore Congressman Kweisi Mfume, and others—include biographical information, as well as MSTA's address and telephone number.

MISSOURI, NORTH DAKOTA

Judges Rule Against Funding Inequities

Within a month of each other, judges in two midwestern states, Missouri and North Dakota, ruled their state's school finance systems unconstitutional.

In Missouri, Circuit Court Judge Byron Kinder said relying on property taxes to fund education created schools that ranged from "the golden to the God-awful." Per-pupil spending in the state ranges from $2,653 to $9,750.

Missouri NEA had filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the 92 school districts challenging the current funding formula. According to M-NEA, the decision is "an excellent one for supporters of public education."

North Dakota Education Association President Walt Halestad called the ruling in his state "both good news and bad." The good: new pressure on the legislature to take some action on school funding. The bad: without new money, some school districts will lose out.

Appeals are expected in both states.

PUERTO RICO

Retirees Mark Silver Jubilee

This year marks the silver jubilee of the Department of Retired Teachers of Asociación de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Retired Teachers Association). The Department has organized 40 local chapters and 12,000 members. The Department has maintained a steadily growing membership roster, signing up 300 new members each year.

Key to the Department's success is the attractive benefits package it offers, including medical services, hospitalization, and life insurance.

What's more, the Department accepts members at all levels—teachers, administrators, and education support staff.

According to Diego Hernandez, president of the Department of Retired Teachers, "There's no question that when teachers retire they'll continue as Association members in the Retired Teachers Department."

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Tomorrow's Schools Today

NEA-New Hampshire wants school employees to have a chance to be more than mere participants in school restructuring. A project called Designing Tomorrow's Schools Today aims to prepare members to lead these efforts.

Last winter, NEA-NH trained 28 members to offer a workshop on taking the initiative in restructuring. Local Associations now can get the workshop for their members on request.

WYOMING

Success in the Legislature

The Wyoming Education Association scored two wins in the state legislature this year: a due process law for K-12 teachers and a truly autonomous state teacher standards board—only the ninth such board in the nation.

The new due process law provides safeguards for teachers who are being terminated: probationary teachers must be given reasons, and tenured teachers' cases will be heard by independent hearing officers.

The standards board now has direct authority to license teachers and other certificated school employees. Before, Fotter explains, its role had been merely advisory.

JOBLESS RATE STILL HIGH

Is the Economy Recovering?

Depends who you ask. But it does appear from various indicators—including GNP growth and decreasing interest rates—that the economy is picking up a little steam.

Last to feel the upturn are the nation's jobless. In February, figures showed 8,876,000 unemployed, a rate of 7 percent. That's down just three tenths of a percent from December '92.

Below: the February employment and unemployment numbers and percentages from the nation's 11 biggest states followed by the January reports from the rest of the states.

IN 11 LARGE STATES

The Labor Department reports latest-month employment figures for these 11 large states.

States	February Employed	February Jobless	Jobless rate Jan.	Jobless rate Feb.
California	13,899,000	1,506,000	9.5%	9.8%
Florida	6,263,000	451,000	7.8	6.7
Illinois	5,560,000	479,000	6.5	7.9
Massachusetts	2,901,000	241,000	8.2	7.7
Michigan	4,274,000	309,000	7.1	6.8
New Jersey	3,609,000	306,000	7.4	7.8
New York	7,946,000	688,000	8.5	8.0
North Carolina	3,321,000	183,000	5.4	5.2
Ohio	5,126,000	369,000	7.0	6.7
Pennsylvania	5,586,000	422,000	7.5	7.0
Texas	8,060,000	656,000	7.8	7.5

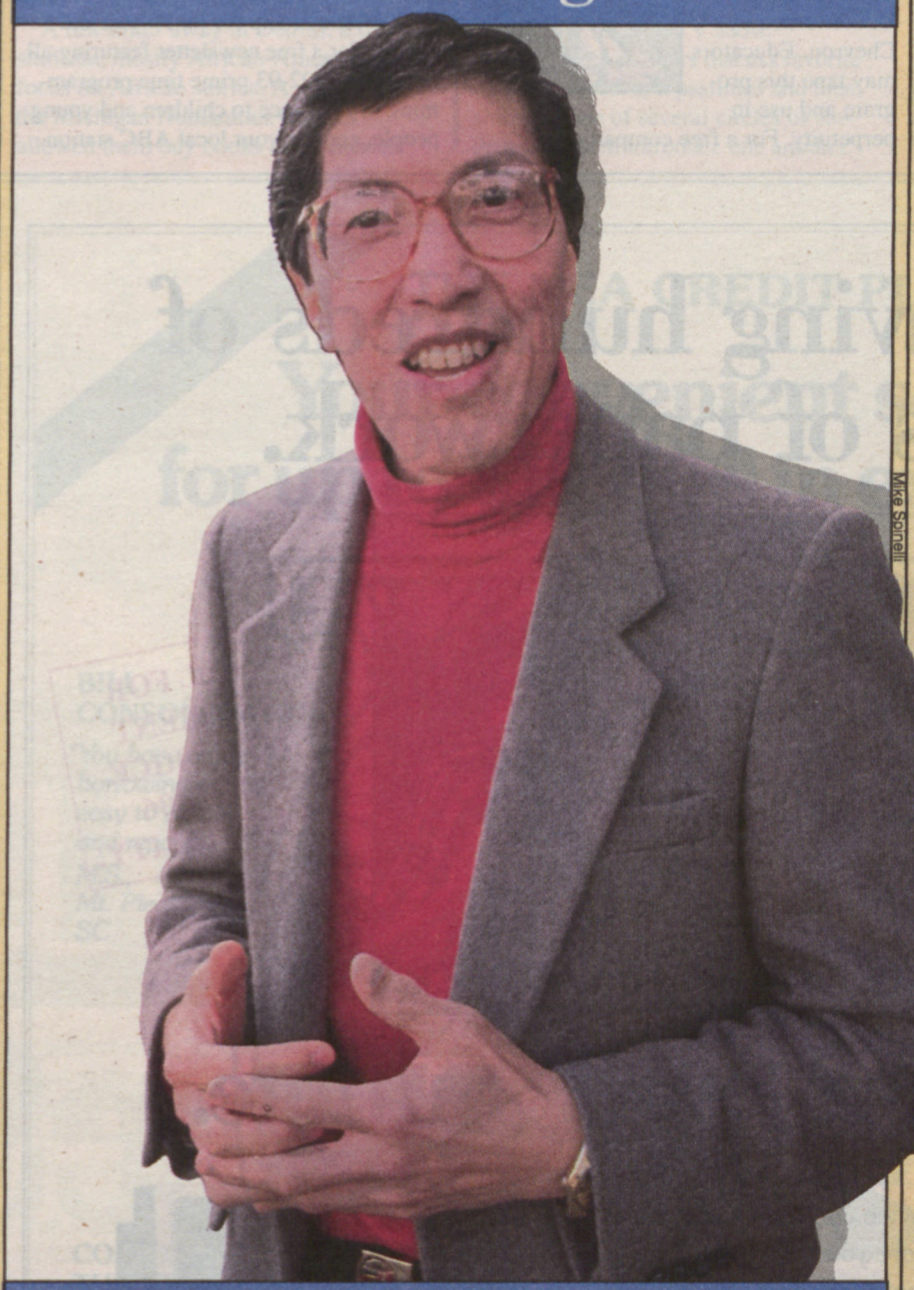
ELSEWHERE

January figures are latest available for these states.

States	January Employed	January Jobless	Jobless rate Dec.	Jobless rate Jan.
Alabama	1,811,110	159,400	6.8%	8.1%
Alaska	241,300	22,200	8.2	8.4
Arizona	1,638,100	136,200	7.3	7.7
Arkansas	1,024,600	81,000	7.5	7.3
Colorado	1,698,200	102,400	5.5	5.7
Connecticut	1,633,700	122,700	7.4	7.0
Delaware	362,100	16,400	4.5	4.3
Georgia	3,060,200	215,700	6.4	6.6
Hawaii	550,800	26,500	4.6	4.6
Idaho	485,200	34,000	6.7	6.6
Indiana	2,625,000	177,200	6.3	6.3
Iowa	1,496,100	68,900	4.3	4.4
Kansas	1,279,800	57,000	4.2	4.3
Kentucky	1,657,700	108,600	6.5	6.2
Louisiana	1,740,900	151,500	8.1	8.0
Maine	608,300	51,100	7.3	7.8
Maryland	2,457,900	152,400	6.1	5.8
Minnesota	2,377,400	132,600	4.9	5.3
Mississippi	1,098,200	69,900	6.6	6.0
Missouri	2,502,300	152,900	5.4	5.8
Montana	377,900	28,900	6.5	7.1
Nebraska	825,300	23,700	2.8	2.8
Nevada	634,900	47,400	6.1	7.0
New Hampshire	594,000	51,800	7.2	8.0
New Mexico	680,100	47,700	6.0	6.6
North Dakota	300,200	13,700	4.6	4.4
Oklahoma	1,451,100	80,600	5.4	5.3
Oregon	1,433,500	112,700	7.2	7.3
Rhode Island	489,800	42,000	7.8	7.9
South Carolina	1,673,700	111,800	5.6	6.3
South Dakota	352,500	14,000	3.1	3.8
Tennessee	2,292,300	162,900	6.1	6.6
Utah	781,400	40,400	5.4	4.9
Vermont	301,900	19,800	5.9	6.2
Virginia	3,154,000	193,200	5.9	5.8
Washington	2,402,200	211,800	7.9	8.1
West Virginia	690,400	82,000	10.5	10.6
Wisconsin	2,595,100	124,500	4.5	4.6
Wyoming	226,300	10,900	4.6	4.6

Meet:

Derald Wing Sue


Mike Sorrell

Count Us All

Corporations and school districts are among the organizations that seek out Derald Wing Sue for advice on multicultural matters. Sue is a counseling psychologist based in Oakland, California. He also teaches at California State University, Hayward, and with the Columbia University Executive Training Program.

NEA Today staff writer Nancy Needham recently interviewed Sue in Cincinnati—where he was consulting with a corporate client—on the subject of ethnic relationships today.

Is there a new level of interethnic hostility in this country?
Yes. For minorities there used to be a "common enemy"—the Eurocentric. Now minorities must deal with each other, and we're realizing we have a lot of work to do with one another. There are misunderstandings that we overlooked.

How do these misunderstandings—minority-minority or minority-white—play out in schools?
Many minority students feel that teachers and fellow classmates have stereotypes about them—about their interests, for example, or their future college majors. Minority students are often teased about their ethnicity. These things affect the campus climate.

We're witnessing an increase in overt racist acts in schools for two reasons:

First, during the Reagan period, there was a sanctioning of racist and biased views. Actions that would have been unacceptable earlier were now condoned.

Second, changing demographics. School systems are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. White students feel threatened. White teachers are threatened by the demand for curriculum change that puts emphasis on minorities' contributions.

When schools call you in as a consultant, what do they want?
It's rare that a district will ask me to come in to recommend preventive measures. They call either because of a conflict between a teacher and a student or an incident that blows up.

The first thing I do is make a careful assessment of the level of multiculturalism a district has reached.

At the lowest level, the district leadership believes firmly in EuroAmerican ethnocentrism—which everyone else has to adapt to. In the middle is an "affirmative action" level, where officials see things in terms of numbers—if we have this many minority teachers, we're fine—but they make no internal changes. Then there's a higher level where the district is enthusiastically trying to infuse multiculturalism into the whole school culture.

Finally, there comes a truly multicultural level: but there is no district like this. It's an ideal.

What would the ideal be like?
The curriculum is no longer Eurocentric, but offers multiple perspectives.

You mean you start at zero?
Yes. Develop a knowledge base—concepts, readings, materials. An example would be the Portland, Oregon, baseline study or the changes made in Prince George's County, Maryland.

But are there things every kid should know? Lexington and Concord, say?
I don't know how to answer that. I can say: kids should be exposed to as many perspectives as possible.

What if a client doesn't accept your assessment of the situation?
I think everyone needs to learn to be bicultural. When I was in third grade I was standing in front of my classroom talking to my brother in Chinese. The teacher told me "you have to speak English if you want to succeed." I was humiliated. I told my mother I never wanted to speak Chinese again. I felt ashamed of my cultural heritage.

The teacher should have said: "It's wonderful you speak a second language—I wish I could do that—but remember that you need to be able to use English here."

Multiculturalism is a two-way process. Minorities who have to adjust to English don't sense any effort on the part of English-speakers to come halfway.

To me multiculturalism is a richness. It is not deviant, not negative. I find it difficult to see how people are put off by it. It's a matter of seeing things from multiple perspectives. To me, intelligence is one's ability to see things from multiple, often contradictory, perspectives.

What should educators read on multiculturalism?
I don't think it's a matter of reading. No one thing can cause change. It's cumulative. If educators are going to become multicultural, they must step out of their current lives.

In workshops with mostly white participants, I ask how many have been to, say, an all-Asian or all-Black event? Only by doing that will they know what it means to be multicultural.

How can school districts change employees' behavior?
One way is through incentives—build multicultural criteria into employee appraisals. This is not an ethnic quota system, but a way of rewarding staff with multicultural perspectives. Business is ahead of education on this because they know their consumer base is changing.

There seems to be a backlash against multiculturalism. Should people back off for awhile?
No, that's the message always given to minorities: you've come a long way. My feeling is we need to keep pushing. I don't want us to back off.

This country has always been a great experiment. There never has been a multicultural society, but we can be the first to try. We have the most diverse nation on earth.

But I also believe things will get worse before they get better. The argument over multiculturalism is tearing at the fabric of our society. After all, most wars in the world are ethnic conflicts.

We're looking at a scary situation. Take the L.A. riots—they weren't just a reaction to one episode. They were an expression of underlying feelings of powerlessness and disenfranchisement.

What kind of experience do you want for your own children?
I have a 10-year-old daughter, Marissa, and a 16-year-old son, Derald Paul. I want them to be free to be as bicultural as they want to be.

I want them to go through an educational system where they do not feel humiliated, but instead can be proud of their Asian-American heritage.

At the same time, I do want my son and daughter to experience some discrimination and racism. I know they will encounter it sooner or later, and I want them to be prepared. I think we make a mistake to protect our children from ever experiencing these things. They need survival skills.

The point is not to avoid conflict, but to get people—educators especially—to reach out. Even when they make blunders, as my third grade teacher did, we cannot write them off.

It's hard not to do that when children are involved. But as an adult, I no longer let blunders end relationships. I wouldn't want to be written off when I do something offensive. The question is: can we reach one another?

RESOURCES

TV Tips

Schoolbreak Special: Crosses on the Lawn—*CBS, Tuesday, April 13, 4-5 p.m. ET.* Drama about racial prejuduce. For a free guide to the 1992-93 Schoolbreak Specials, write to CBS Community Relations, 51 W. 52nd St., New York, NY 10019.

National Geographic Special: Survivors of the Skeleton Coast—*PBS, Wednesday, April 14, 8-9 p.m. ET.* Rare scenes of wildlife on the Skeleton Coast of Namibia, in southwest Africa. Underwritten by Chevron. Educators may tape this program and use in perpetuity. For a free companion resource guide, contact your local public television station.

National Geographic

Afterschool Special: Girl friend—*ABC, Thursday, April 15, 4-5 p.m. ET.* This drama about two young girls and how racism affects their friendship, won a $5,000 scholarship for its 17-year-old author. For a free newsletter featuring all of ABC's 1992-93 prime time programming of relevance to children and young people, contact your local ABC station.

The Longest Hatred—*PBS, Wednesday, April 21, 9-11:30 p.m. ET.* An analysis of anti-Semitism, one of Western civilization's most persistent and most destructive prejudices.

The Ultimate Driving Challenge—*CBS, Friday, April 23, 9-10 p.m. ET.* The audience goes behind the wheel in a unique national test of driving competence and safety practices on challenging roadways, with an entertaining mix of celebrity participants, expert drivers, state-of-the-art computer graphics, and in-home viewer participation.

National Geographic Explorer: Nature's Fury (working title)—*TBS, Sunday, April 25, 9-11 p.m. ET.* Film charting the disastrous aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, plus segments on lightning and earthquakes.

Earth to Kids: A Guide to Products for a Healthy Planet—*HBO, sometime in April; check local listings.* Documentary showing kids and parents the types of products they should use to help save our threatened environment.

Los Angeles: Anatomy of a Riot—*A&E, Monday, May 3, 7-8 a.m. E.T.* A look at the complex issues that set off last year's civil unrest in Los Angeles.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a computerized clearinghouse for children's TV and radio in Washington, D.C.

Congratulations, Teacher TV!

Teacher TV, the weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and The Learning Channel, has won a silver medal, a New York Festival Television Program Award. The award category is educational/instructional adult series.

Teacher TV airs on The Learning Channel, Sunday evenings, 6-6:30 p.m. ET. Its run of 13 new shows continues through April 11. Repeat programs air on April 18 and 25.

April 4: ***Standards.*** Explore how educators and others are developing the new national teaching standards.

April 11: ***The ABC's of Getting Resources.*** Learn creative, off-beat ways that teachers bring materials and other resources into their classrooms.

April 18: ***Technology in the Classroom.***

April 25: ***The Making of a Teacher.***

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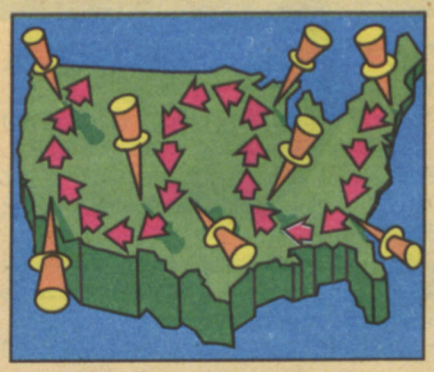
TED043

IDEA EXCHANGE

Walking across America

The 150 fifth and sixth graders at our school spend 10 minutes each day walking "across the country."



Walking a short designated course behind the school, the kids pay imaginary visits to "sights" along the way, including the Henry Ford Museum in Detroit, the Statue of Liberty in New York City, and Atlantic City, New Jersey, where they play Monopoly, a game with street names identical to those in Atlantic City.

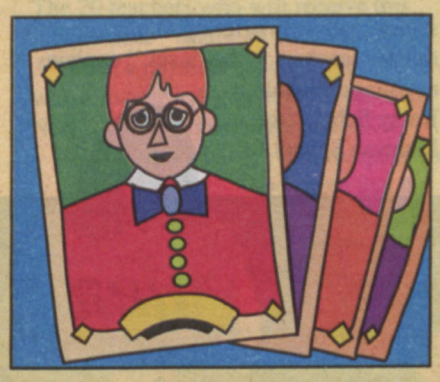
The students learn something about every area they visit. Accompanying lessons involve math, reading, and writing. A large map in our school's hallway shows how far they've traveled.

Sandy Pitts, Elaine Woidtke
Brush Elementary School
Grafton, Ohio

Trading Character Cards

My senior English students read several novels during the year. To relieve the routine of reading, discussing, and testing, I plan supplementary activities. One that the kids particularly enjoy involves designing character cards, similar to baseball cards.

Each student chooses four minor characters from a novel and then designs a card for each. The card includes the character's name, nickname (they can create one), physical description, hobby (made up to suit the character), and any other pertinent information that will fit on a



standard index card.

Finally, on the opposite side of the card, the students draw a picture or stick representation of the character. The kids then trade their finished products.

Kay McCrory
Portland High School
Portland, Tennessee

Tales of Two Classes

My storytelling club at a suburban middle school swaps yarns with kids in a similar club from an inner-city elementary school. The goal is to better understand folks of all backgrounds.

At my school, we focus on building self-esteem and confidence and on performing community service while learning about other cultures. We share stories with preschoolers, senior citizens, and other middle school students.

A few miles away in Detroit, a friend's students, mostly African-Americans, focus on African stories. A grant from the Michigan Humanities Council allowed them buy books and materials and to hire storytellers to teach the stories to the students.

When our two reading groups met for the first time, we found several activities tremendously helpful:

▶ Pair up each student with a partner from the other school with a similar birthday or favorite TV show.

▶ Have the partners discuss favorite school subjects and pastimes and then, sitting in one of several circles of students, let them introduce one another.

Have each club give a presentation. My students presented a Hawaiian story using hand and string manipulation; the others, the story of Kwanza.

The students and the parent chaperones found they had much in common. Any apprehension the adults might have had melted away after seeing the kids' enthusiastic response.

Judy Sima
Chatterton Middle School
Warren, Michigan

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D.W., Norman, OK

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TCP043

THE PAY PICTURE

Those calling for education reform 10 years ago were explicit: teacher salaries must go up if education quality is to improve. A decade later, while thousands of teachers still make embarrassingly low salaries, we have made some progress.

New Jersey News Photo

Mahwah (New Jersey) Education Association President Martha Anderson agrees salaries at the top end of her local's contract are enviable, but notes they're not out of line considering members' experience and Mahwah's high cost of living.

Reform Boosts But Pace Slows

Ten years into the education reform movement, school faculty and support staff salaries have moved up, respectably in some states and school districts, almost exceptionally in others.

But now the upward salary momentum has definitely stalled. In the current school year, faculty salaries are up just 2 percent nationally, the smallest increase in 20 years.

In such populous states as Florida and California, school employees are seeing only meager increases in their paychecks. In 1991-92, Florida teacher salaries rose a paltry 1.7 percent above 1990-91 levels. California teacher pay that year moved up only 1.5 percent.

In some states (North Carolina, Virginia, Delaware) and districts, salaries have actually gone in reverse. In Los Angeles, the nation's second largest school district, teachers this past winter reluctantly voted to accept a 10 percent pay *cut*.

The current salary stagnation stands in stark contrast to the resounding compensation victories of the mid- and late 1980s. Back in 1987, for instance, a concerted campaign by NEA's state and local affiliates in Connecticut drove top teacher salaries above $40,000 a year, a real milestone in teacher compensation.

In that same year, NEA's Iowa state affiliate helped win passage of Governor Terry Branstad's Excellence in Education Act, which put millions of dollars in new money into teacher salaries.

In Connecticut, Iowa, and the host of other states that saw dramatic salary gains in the 1980s, the common denominator was coordinated action by every level of the Association. NEA state and local affiliates, backed by NEA support from the national level (see sidebar on opposite page), worked methodically, at the bargaining table and in legislative lobbies, to turn rhetoric about the need for higher salaries into dollars-and-cents reality.

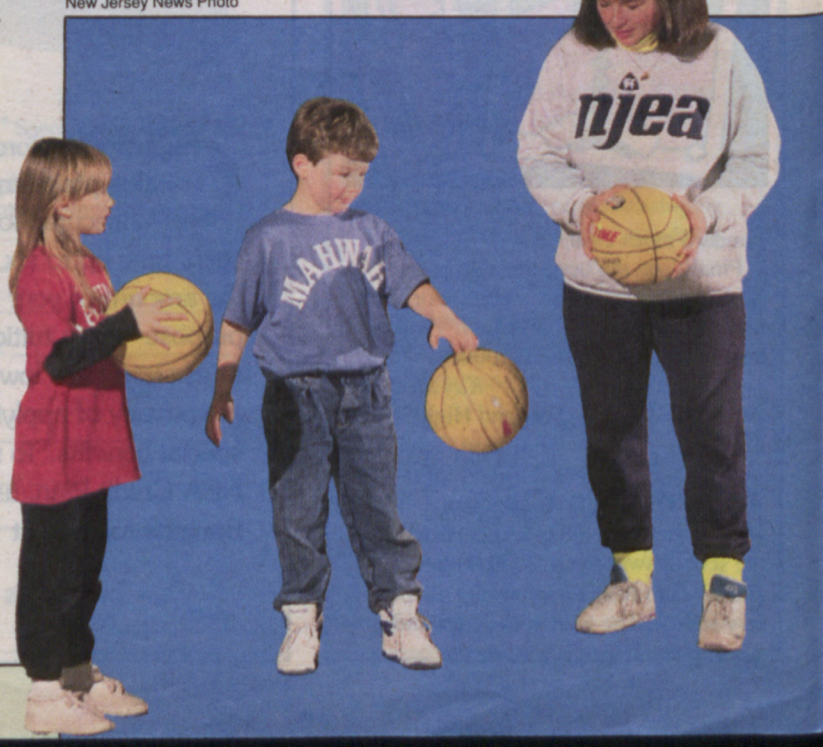
In some school districts, this Association partnership has produced some astounding results. In Mahwah, New Jersey, for instance, 20 teachers are set to earn $81,000—*each* by 1994. The Mahwah story offers an excellent case study of both what can be achieved through Association action and what remains to be done.

From the suburban streets of Mahwah, Manhattan is just a 40-minute commute—one that many local residents make. Others work closer to home, in Mahwah's relatively healthy economy. The closing of a large Ford plant set Mahwah back a decade ago, but today the community is home to United Parcel Service and Jaguar.

This economic stability helps create a positive atmosphere at the bargaining table. Despite the current national economic downturn, Mahwah school employees have been able to negotiate a respectable settlement: a 5.85 percent increase for each of the next three years. In addition, the school board agreed to pick up the increased costs of the benefits package.

As for the $81,000 salary at the current top of the Mahwah salary scale: "In offering to pay experienced teachers at that level," explains negotiations chair Kathy Schal, "the Mahwah School

New Jersey News Photo



THE PAY PICTURE

For the Average NEA Member Today, Making Ends Meet Is Still a Struggle

"You pretty much need to have two professional wage earners to make a middle class income here," says Waupun (Wisconsin) Middle School science teacher Gary Meier.

With 23 years on the job and a master's degree plus 20 credits, Meier is earning $42,000 this year. Wisconsin's average teacher's salary of $35,481 puts the Badger State in 20th place in the nation.

After taxes, Meier's income drops to $26,400, so his wife, Barb, also works to help support the family, which includes daughter Jaime, 16, and son Christopher, 14. Barb earns $13,000 a year substitute teaching and teaching kids in an at-risk program.

Meier's two children are nearing college age—Jaime plans to enter college in the fall of 1994—and Meier is experiencing "sticker shock" as he checks into tuition costs.

"After looking at some private colleges, I've come to realize they're beyond our reach," says Meier. "We're currently pricing state schools."

Both Jaime and Christopher have discussed whether to pursue a teaching degree. They've both decided against it.

"They see that there are simply too many other careers that offer a better financial future," laments Meier. The situation irks him "no end," he acknowledges.

"Some of my former students, who didn't attend a four-year college and work as technicians for a local utility company make the same salary after five years as I do after 23 years on the job," says Meier.

Morry Gash

The Meier family: Barb, Jaime, 16, Christopher, 14, and Gary.

NEA Backs State Pay Campaigns

Since 1987, NEA has put more than $3 million into state affiliate campaigns to improve the compensation of school employees. Over the past half-dozen years, some 39 NEA state affiliates have received this targeted NEA assistance.

Raising school employee salaries, says NEA Director of Collective Bargaining/Compensation John Dunlop, demands long-term teamwork—at the local, state, and national levels of the Association. That's the basic assumption behind NEA's target compensation grant program.

The target grant strategy recognizes a simple fact of school district compensation life: the pay levels in one state directly impact the pay levels in neighboring states.

"The idea is to select a few states as nationwide or regional 'pacesetters,'" explains NEA's Dunlop. "We believe that when we move compensation up in one state, surrounding states—and maybe states in other parts of the country—will be spurred to keep pace with that state."

Consequently, the NEA target grants—which range from $20,000 to $80,000—go into states where salary breakthroughs are likely to affect salaries in surrounding states.

NEA state affiliates have placed the grant money into a different assortment of strategies. Some NEA state affiliates have used their target grant dollars from NEA to focus their efforts on getting state legislatures to appropriate more money for education. The NEA target grants in these states help fund intensive lobbying and media advertising campaigns.

Others states have used NEA target grant dollars to plan campaigns to change the tax system in their states and bring more revenue into education coffers over the long term. Still other NEA state affiliates use the target grant aid to bolster coordinated bargaining efforts, seeking the best possible local settlements first and working to bring subsequent settlements into line with them.

stsPay

Board is sending a clear message."

The school board, Schal points out, is saying to teachers—and the community—that the district should reward advanced study and value teachers as highly as other professionals.

The top pay slot is reserved for teachers with at least 20 years experience in the district and 60 graduate credits. The 20 teachers who will receive this "super max" salary all have PhDs.

Schal, a physical education teacher with a master's degree and 22 years in New Jersey schools, makes $49,074.

NEA activists in Mahwah are quick to point out that the attention-grabbing high end of the Mahwah salary schedule doesn't tell the local's full compensation story. Starting teachers, says Mahwah Education Association (MEA) President Martha Anderson, begin their careers at about $28,000. Most of the steps in the salary schedule, Anderson points out, put Mahwah teachers somewhere above the national teacher salary average of $34,000.

Kathy Schal is working for a level playing field for her students and her local Association.

"In good economic times we've been able to negotiate settlements at about 9 percent annually," says Schal. "Now the recession has hit us hard. Taxpayers won't put up with large settlements for teachers when other residents are without jobs."

The bottom line on Mahwah salaries: For teachers at the low end of the salary schedule, making ends meet is still hard.

"No one's going to get rich in our jobs," says Mahwah Education Association President Anderson. "With college expenses and the cost of living in this New York suburb, most families struggle."

Still, Anderson and Schal are proud of the results they've achieved. They and their colleagues in the Mahwah Education Association have worked hard.

One example: the large number of NEA members in Mahwah who've attended summer leadership training workshops run by the New Jersey Education Association, NEA's state affiliate. At these workshops, Mahwah activists have honed their collective bargaining skills.

Says Schal: "We prepare before we go to the bargaining table—and it shows. Our pre-bargaining meetings last up to 12 hours, keeping us planning until early morning. The school board recognizes that we're a strong, active Association. There's no substitute for respect."

MEA's negotiations team is hand-picked to reflect each job category of the 275-member, all-inclusive local. The 12 activists on the team include teacher aides, bus drivers, maintenance workers, secretaries, and nurses, as well as teachers.

MEA's success at the bargaining table also reflects the local's willingness to work with nearby Association locals in a system of "coordinated bargaining" facilitated by the New Jersey Education Association.

NJEA provides local Associations with training in networking and problem solving and sets countywide bargaining goals. With UniServ staffer John Biondi serving as chief negotiator, the locals aim to reach these goals.

At the same time, NJEA helps local Associations organize "pass the budget campaigns" in their communities. In New Jersey, local tax bases account for an average of 55 percent of education funds.

The bulk of the rest of the money that pays for education in New Jersey comes from the state, and that's where NJEA's statewide political action efforts come in. NJEA's political action program works to help elect friends of education to the state legislature. That electoral effort helps protect and increase state aid to local school districts.

"We're very proud of our efforts to make sure every school employee has a salary and benefits package that reflects their training and the responsibility they bear," sums up NJEA President Betty Kraemer. "It's no longer true that school employees must put up with starvation wages—thanks to the efforts of NEA, NJEA, and our locals around the state."

In New Jersey and around the nation, these efforts will have to increase. Salaries are indeed higher than they used to be. But, in today's fast-moving economy, just a few years of salary stagnation can wipe out a decade of gains.

—Victoria Lytle

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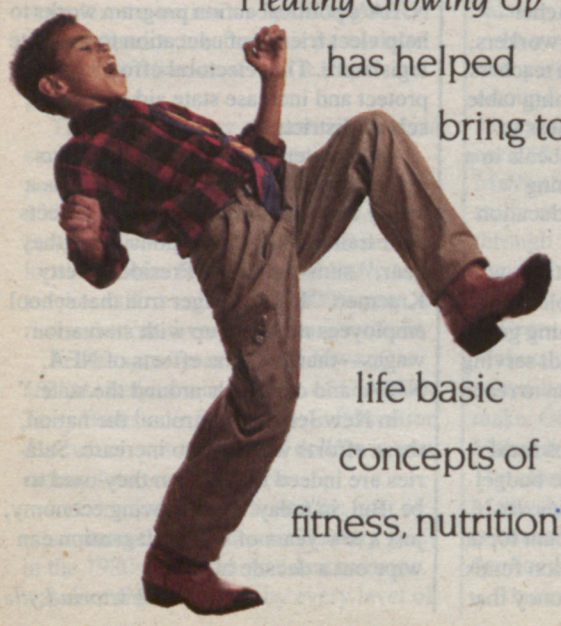

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Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work

English teacher Patsy Graham sees many benefits of 90-minute classes.

Radical Restructuring: Changing School Culture

Now in its third year, the four-a-day block plan at Colorado Springs' Wasson High School is causing staff to take stock and look ahead.

If they were running a want ad, it would read like this: school seeking full-time teachers, all subjects, to teach three classes a day. Class size, up to 25; student load, up to 75. Apply at Wasson High School, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Wow. Where do I sign up? That's what any high school teacher, bogged down in seven-period days, would say.

That's what 96 percent of the faculty at Wasson High School said in a January 1990 vote. Faced with 20-year-veteran burnout and changing demographics in the student body, the Wasson faculty voted to switch from the traditional seven-period day to a four-period block plan (three teaching periods plus a planning period).

"We had gone from being a school for privileged kids to one with many at-risk kids," explains social studies chair Gary Kunce, who chaired the restructuring steering committee. "We teachers needed to change, but first we had to ease our burdens."

The block plan began the following September. There are two keys to its success: first, the four daily periods are 90 minutes long compared to the traditional 55 minutes. That makes it theoretically possible for teachers to cover a year's worth of material in one semester.

Second, teachers have only half their total teaching load in class at any one time. Notice in junior Sara Payne's schedule (below) that Sara didn't take English III last fall. But half her classmates did. The other half (including Sara) are taking English III this spring.

But how do teachers cope with three 90-minute periods a day?

"You plan," explains Spanish teacher Maria Steen: "Under the block system it's impossible to improvise."

In fact, you do more than plan, you revolutionize. "I learned to teach all over again," Steen adds.

To use the 90 minutes effectively, Steen chose teaching techniques that involve students working together, that ask students to produce a product, that play to different learning styles, that reinforce previous learning, that are inherently motivating—even fun.

Other staff tell of "opening up the classroom beyond the four walls" with field trips, or of "compressing" presentations to bare essentials.

It's now been three years, and the Wasson block plan has received national attention. But its effects aren't as clear-cut as an experimenter might like.

There's general agreement that the positive effects below can be attributed to the block plan.

Social studies chair Gary Kunce headed Wasson High's planning committee.

Lis Griffin

► The schedule's more relaxed for students—and becoming easier for teachers as the transition pressures wear off.

► Students have more in-class time to practice and consult with teachers—on drafts of written material, for instance.

► The school offers new courses, such as honors Spanish, because there's more room in the schedule (students have room for eight, not seven, full-year courses).

► Students are taking more electives, also because of the eighth period, and earning more credits. Some are even able to graduate early.

Other outcomes are less clear. They may or may not be problems, may or may not be related to the block plan.

► A's are down, although grades generally are unchanged. After an initial upward spurt, grades under the block plan drifted back to where they started.

"We've had demographic changes, such as increased student mobility, that might be associated with lower grades," explains Wasson Principal George Houston.

► Courses cover less. Many teachers have found they can't cover as much in one 90-minute session as they could in two 55-minute sessions. Houston says this happens in most block plans and can be compensated for by redesigning courses (Advance Placement courses are given over three quarters.)

► Students may lose continuity between course levels because block scheduling keeps them away from a subject for as much as a summer and a quarter. Houston says the evidence is that such students are no worse off than if they had been away from the subject for the summer only.

Wasson's priority now: creating a curriculum in preparation for the arrival of ninth graders next fall.

—Nancy R. Needham

PERIODS

Fall Quarters 1992	Gym 1st Q. / 1 / AP History 1 2nd Q.	2 Spanish II	Lunch, Activities	3 Trigonometry	4 Yearbook
Spring Quarters 1993	AP History 2 1st Q. / 1 / AP History 3 2nd Q.	2 Chemistry	Lunch, Activities	3 English III	4 Yearbook

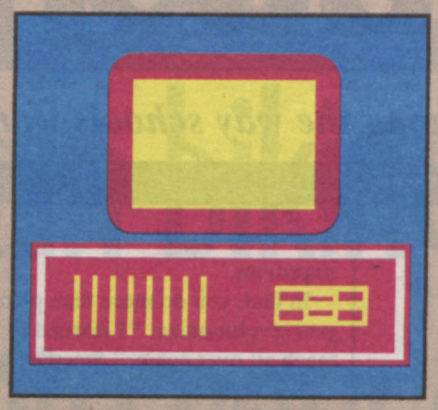
This is the 1992-93 schedule of Sara Payne, 16, a Wasson High School junior. This spring Sara is doing a year's worth of English III and chemistry, and finishing up AP History (given in three quarters). She already did all of trig and Spanish II last fall. "I'll end up with more credits this year—16 as opposed to 14—under the block plan than under the old system," Sara says.

RESEARCH CLUES

Link Up

Researchers Denis Newman, Susan Bernstein, and Paul A. Reese say it's easier than you think to connect a computer network inside your school to one linking many schools. Networks inside a school are called local area networks, or LANs, and those connecting many schools are called wide area networks, or WANs.

Connecting LANs and WANs is called internetworking. The researchers say most schools could internetwork with their present technology, but aren't. This internetworking could help schools get their money's worth from computer upgrade funds. Get the complete report (Technical Report No. 22) from Bank Street College of Education, 610 West 112th St., New York, NY 10025.



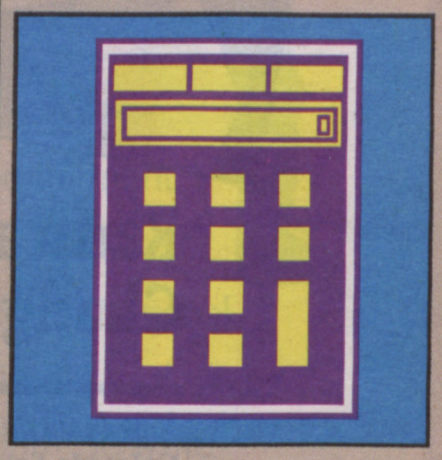
Whole Language? Yes

The whole-language method of teaching reading has displaced phonics-based instruction in many schools lately. A study by Jerry Milligan and Herbert Berg, published in *Reading Improvement* (Vol. 29, No. 3, Fall 1992) showed that whole language helps boys more than girls, and especially helps low- and middle-ability students. Milligan and Berg studied four suburban first grade classes that used whole language methods and four using traditional word recognition methods, comparing improvement in reading comprehension after a year. Girls' reading improved the same amount with both instructional methods.

Calculator Controversy

Because of the results of a survey of students using calculators on the SATs, the College Board is recommending that all students now use calculators on the PSAT and SAT.

The Board determined that calculator use increases SAT math scores a small amount so they've decided to allow calculators, and then lower scores by a uniform percentage to compensate, according to an article by William M. Bulkeley in the January 11, 1993 *Wall Street Journal*.



The survey also found that 94 percent of college-bound students own or have access to a calculator, and only 1 percent said they didn't know how to use one. In addition, the College Board survey found that white and Asian students used calculators more often than those of other ethnic groups. Each week 86% of whites and Asians used calculators, while only 80% of Hispanics and 77% of Blacks did.

Still on Track

A national study of teachers and 14,000 eighth grade students in public schools shows that white students and Asian students are more likely to be categorized as high in academic ability than Hispanic, Black or American Indian students in both math and English.

In eighth grade English classes, for example, 40 percent of Asian students and 32 percent of white students were classified in the high ability group, versus 18 percent of Hispanic kids, 15 percent of Black kids and 9 percent of American Indian kids.

In math, 47 percent of Asians and 35 percent of whites were classified in the high ability category versus 18 percent of Hispanics, 15 percent of Blacks, and 10 percent of American Indians, according to the Department of Education survey.

"I really don't need more computers. I need to get more out of the ones I've got."

"My district is pretty small. Are you still interested in what I have to say?"

"I'd like to have a say in any technologies you guys are planning for teachers."

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Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn.

CANCER & kids

Gerald Gilchrist, M.D., is chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the Mayo Clinic and Mayo Medical School in Rochester, Minnesota. A former chair of the pediatric oncology section of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Gilchrist has worked in this field since the early '60s.

What types of cancer are most common in children?
Leukemia is the most common. After that come brain cancer and lymphoma (such as Hodgkins disease). About 7,000 to 8,000 American children are diagnosed with cancer each year.

Are these different from the cancers common in adults
The pattern of tumors and the sites of the cancer genes are very different in children.

Most adult cancers arise in the inside or outside linings of the organs, such as lung cancer, breast cancer, or colon cancer. And they're often linked to environmental and behavioral factors, like smoking, hormonal changes, diet, and toxins.

With children, such factors don't seem to play a major role in causing cancer.

Why is that?
All of us have a predisposition to developing cancer. We're all born with cancer genes and have the potential to induce cancer. In some children, genes repress certain functions, thus preventing cancer. In others, genes play a role in activating cells to become cancerous.

Is cancer inherited?
The heredity factor is an emotionally charged issue. All of us in pediatric oncology are working hard to find the causes of childhood cancer, and that includes looking at why certain children, are more predisposed to certain cancers than others.

But one form of cancer can be inherited.

What's that?
A rare form of eye cancer called retinoblastoma. We've identified the actual gene responsible for this cancer. If a family member has had the disease, a child should be examined soon after birth.

A tumor that's detected early can be taken care of by laser surgery. Later on, surgery might mean removing the eye.

Are children of certain ages prone to different cancers?
Yes. We've found that in children aged two to seven, leukemia, kidney cancer, and cancers of the neurosystem are the most likely to appear.

In adolescents, we see more cases of Hodgkins disease and, even more of bone cancer. The bone tumors in adolescents appear to be related to the teenager's rapid growth phase.

Has treatment for these cancers changed over the years?
There are still three main forms of treatment: surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Technological advances in surgery and radiation therapy have certainly improved our ability to treat cancer, but the most dramatic advances have been in area of chemotherapy.

We've learned to use the drugs more effectively—and that's led to improvements in surgery and radiation therapy as well. Using chemotherapy has allowed us to cut back on the amount of radiation therapy used on certain cancers. In bone cancer, pretreating a child with chemotherapy has enabled surgeons to perform delicate tumor removal operations they couldn't perform in the past.

As a result, we now have dramatic cure rates for children with cancer, without as much loss of function.

What are the cure rates?
For children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the cure rate is up to 70 percent. Children with bone tumors are not only keeping their limbs, but have a cure rate of up to 80 percent. Years ago, the cure rate for children with bone cancer was less than 20 percent.

Among children with Hodgkins disease, we now have a cure rate of 90 percent. That's pretty amazing and something we're proud of. Of course, more intensive chemotherapy treatments can also have severe side effects. Often, they require more hospitalization than in the past.

What should educators know about a student with cancer?
It's important for educators and schools to be flexible in dealing with a student who has cancer. That child may be in and out of the hospital for weeks, but we believe it's important to maintain as normal a routine as possible.

That may mean tutoring, to enable the student to keep up with the class. We must work together to try to minimize the negative impact on a child's day-to-day life.

How can school staff help?
By working with the child's pediatric oncology center to develop a reentry program. Here in Minnesota, we have an excellent school reentry program coordinated at Mayo Clinic by Donna Betcher, a pediatric oncology nurse.

Donna worked with the American Cancer Society and a team of teachers, social workers, and child life specialists to develop a program to help the child and school adjust during the student's treatment and return to the classroom.

How does it work?
Pediatric oncology nurses go into the school, and, with the child and family's permission, talk to school employees and classmates about cancer and its treatment. This is important, because the nurse can also answer questions both children and adults have about cancer.

The program includes age-appropriate materials such as coloring books for younger children, a video for older children, a syllabus—all to help children understand this illness.

What questions do the students and school employees ask?
Children want to know if cancer is infectious. They want to know if it was somehow caused by a child's behavior—this is something children are afraid of.

School employees want to know what to do about discipline, and about how much to expect of the child. We have older students put their questions in a box before the nurse's visit so they won't be embarrassed asking what they think is a stupid question.

That's what this program is all about—creating greater understanding of the illness and treatment, to help the student, school employees, and classmates understand.

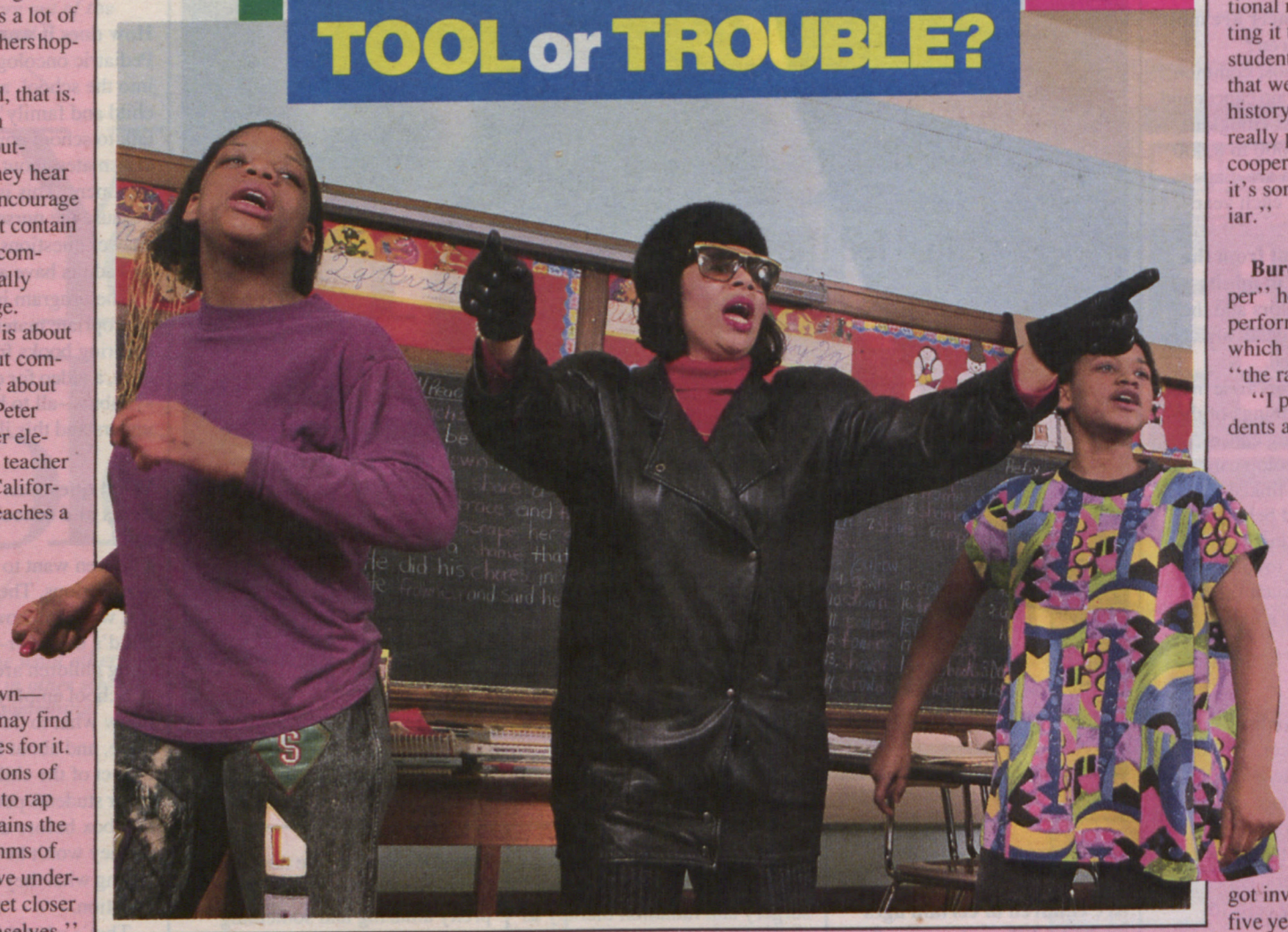
Also, we won't identify the student with cancer unless that student wants us to.

Where can schools request this program?
They can contact the American Cancer Society locally, or they can call the Minnesota division of the Cancer Society at 1/800-582-5152.

The important thing to remember is that pediatric cancer centers and schools need to work together to minimize the disruption of a child's life and maintain a peer support system. That's as important to a child's treatment as the actual treatment itself.

SOUNDS OF OUR TIMES

RAP
TOOL or TROUBLE?



Rap. It began on city streets and reached around the world, a musical revolution with leaders whose names sound more like popsicle flavors than entertainers: LL Cool J, Ice T, Kriss Kross, Fresh Prince, Sir Mix a Lot, Monie Love, and Salt 'n' Pepa.

With its chanting rhythms and street language, rap has become the music of millions. It gets kids dancing, popping, and strutting to a beat. And it gets a lot of parents and teachers hopping, too.

Hopping mad, that is. Adults are often stunned—and outraged—when they hear rap lyrics that encourage violence, or that contain sexist or racist comments and sexually explicit language.

"This music is about power, it's about communication, it's about culture," says Peter Brown, a former elementary school teacher in San Diego, California, who now teaches a special race and human relations class for the district.

Whatever it is, rap is here, and—says Brown—some teachers may find constructive uses for it.

"To the millions of kids who listen to rap music, rap contains the words and rhythms of their world. If we understand that, we get closer to the kids themselves," explains Brown.

"We once had a class discussion on the Kriss Kross song 'How Often Are You Ripped Off?'" says Brown. "It was amazing how many of the students related to the song because they had been robbed or their homes had been broken into.

"To these kids, the song spoke about their world, not mine. But my asking them about the song allowed them to open up," Brown adds. "That's what I mean when I encourage teachers not to close their minds to this music.

"Rap music is unifying an entire generation. You can see it on the music videos with rappers of every culture. They use this medium as an information transfer system."

Brown points to the many high school rap groups springing up across the state and the nation. "One of my former students organized a group that has Filipino, Black American, and white members," says Brown.

"They're breaking down cultural barriers and sending a positive message to younger kids with their music and their image."

With a driving beat, a cast of real characters, and a language all its own, rap's on the school scene—like it or not.

But the negative side of popular rap also concerns Karima Amin, a language arts teacher in Buffalo, New York.

"So much of rap music is filled with images of violence, anger, and sexism," says Amin, who uses rap to teach students about their African-American heritage.

"If kids are already learning negative lessons from certain rappers, we need to counter those with positive lessons or discussions in the classroom."

As part of her multicultural approach to classroom instruction, Amin uses rap music to educate.

She points to the music groups Arrested Development and KRS1 for their positive messages.

Karima Amin even includes Public Enemy, a rap group criticized for its harsh lyrics and militant style, in some of her lessons. "Not all of America's history is hearts and flowers and we have to talk about the issues that a group like Public Enemy might bring up," says Amin.

Amin even wrote her own rap about Black Americans who've contributed to humanity. In response, the students wrote raps about their families and cultures.

There are other ways to use rap in the classroom, says Sonja Burdix, a special education teacher at School 42, an elementary school in Indianapolis. "Since rap music is a form of communication, why not introduce literature, history, and heritage to kids in the same manner?"

"My students gained an appreciation for Langston Hughes this way," Burdix says. "I asked them to read and recite his poetry two ways—first in a traditional manner, then setting it to a rap beat. The students love it so much that we do poetry, even history, this way. They really perk up and work cooperatively because it's something familiar."

Burdix is a "rapper" herself—she has a performance act in which she calls herself "the rapping teacher."

"I perform for students and communities, and my "raps" are educational," says Burdix. "I don't shy away from tough issues like suicide, drug use, and teen pregnancy, because they prompt questions and discussions afterward."

Burdix first got involved with rap five years ago. "A number of students wanted me to sponsor the rap group they'd formed," recalls Burdix. "I told them that first they had to come back to me with positive raps about issues that affected them.

They came back with wonderful raps. Then I responded with a rap from the teacher's point of view."

Putting rap music into its context is a way to use it to educate, adds Amin. "Whether we like it or not, rap music is here to stay, but we can teach kids to analyze it. We can even teach them to use it in a constructive way.

"The key lies in the lessons learned," Amin says. "Isn't that what teaching's all about anyway?"

—Anita Merina

Elementary teacher Sonja Burdix, pictured above with two of her students, demonstrates how rap music is used in her Indianapolis classroom.

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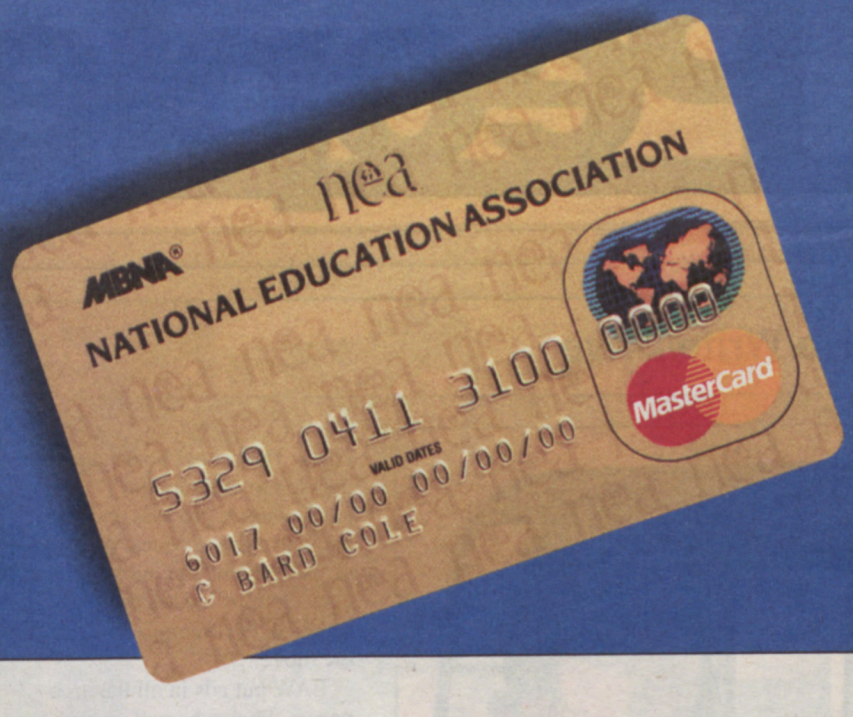

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People

Drive/Write/Drive

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annual best newspaper contest
presented at the better newspaper institute
sheraton gardens, freehold, n.j. march 18-19, 1982

New Jersey Newsphoto

"Going to college at night, I started driving a school bus to help with the tuition," says **Jo Ann Phelps** of Willingboro, New Jersey. A journalism major, Phelps went into newspaper work—but she kept driving that bus, too.

By the time she'd been driving the bus five years, Phelps had won a national award for business writing from the Associated Press.

"I did a special report on farming for a Thanksgiving issue," says Phelps. "An editor submitted it for the AP award without my knowing about it. It was a shock when they told me I'd won."

Still, Phelps kept on driving the bus. "I've always driven special ed kids," she notes. "And I really enjoy it."

Last year, Phelps's local, the Employees Association of Willingboro, faced a crisis. The school board had decided to contract out maintenance, grounds, cafeteria, and custodial services. As EAW vice-president and public relations chair, Phelps led the drive to mobilize the community against the move.

EAW put ads in all the area papers. Phelps herself wrote several powerful op-ed pieces that appeared in the *Burlington County Times*.

"The public supported us and started calling the board members," Phelps explains. "We ending up saving 119 jobs."

Now Phelps is content to write only occasional short newspaper pieces. When she's not on her bus route, she's busy editing the newsletter of the Burlington County Education Association. But if someday she hands off that responsibility to another member, Phelps notes, "I can go back to regular journalism at any time." And keep on driving the bus.

Charles Bickford

Arkansan in Final Four

"Teachers don't have time to be reflective thinkers," explains **Rosemary Faucette**, a seventh grade teacher at Woodland Junior High School in Fayetteville, Arkansas. "Too often, we end up reacting instead of taking the initiative."

A finalist in the 1993 National Teacher of the Year competition, Faucette avoids this pitfall by making time to reflect on her profession. In the process, she's developed what amounts to a philosophy of classroom life, which she calls her "key ring."

The first "key" opens the room of knowledge, says Faucette. "I want my students to know English is dynamic, fun, and challenging."

The second key gets Faucette into the technique-and-art-of-teaching room. "This is the room of risking, experimenting, listening to and learning from others," explains Faucette.

The third key, she says, opens the doors to her students' souls. "This is the key I use the most because it enables me to look into my students' eyes and see the possibilities that exist within each of them."

The other three Teacher of the Year finalists are: Tracey Bailey of Satellite Beach, Florida; Pat Graff of Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Trudi Niewiaroski of Rockville, Maryland. President Clinton will honor the winner at a White House ceremony this month.

On the Sideline in the Swim

Last year **Charles "Skip" Bird** celebrated his 25th year as varsity swimming coach at his alma mater, Valparaiso (Indiana) High School.

The winner of numerous individual and team awards over the years, Bird coaches and teaches from a wheelchair, the result of progressive hip problems from a congenital bone defect.

Bird believes that "in part because of my handicap, my students and my swimmers are more tolerant and understanding and more instinctively helpful to those with differences and disadvantages."

One of just 35 teachers to win a 1992 Walt Disney American Teacher Award, Bird has successfully combined his professions, teaching English (also for 25 years) and coaching swimming, by writing two books—a collection of humorous and inspirational quotations and a swimming training manual.

"I believe kids see in me the value of making the most of what we have, the value of a sense of humor, and the importance of education," says Bird.

Horn Studio

Frank Roberts

Museum in Motion

Arts education got a real boost in Starkville, Mississippi, a few months ago when high school art teacher **Nelle Elam**, drama teacher Paula Mabrey, and principal Stan Miller led a drive to move a 120-year-old house onto school grounds.

Preservationists want to restore the house to its original 1859 form. Plans include turning part of the restored house into a museum showcasing the works of nationally known Mississippi artists.

"This has been a good learning experience for everyone," says Elam. "The kids learned a lot about houses and their furnishings in the 1850s, and they're helping turn the house into a first-rate museum for our community."

The experience reinforces Elam's attitude that art touches all. "Arts education should be a central part of our curriculum," she says. "Where arts programs are viable, kids' attitudes toward school improve and they retain more."

Displaying A Proud Heritage

Ellen Banner

African and African-American memorabilia of quality and in quantity have become available in this country only very recently. But that hasn't stopped Everett, Washington, first grade teacher **Shirley Walthall** from amassing a houseful of collectibles with a Black theme.

Walthall's collection—which includes paintings, lithographs, sculptures, dolls, baskets, wall hangings, jewelry, figurines, swords, books, and more— fills 10 rooms of her two-story home. That's not counting the portion currently housed at the Everett library as part of a Black history display.

The Silver Firs Elementary School teacher started her collection about five years ago with a few items from Africa. When word spread to friends and dealers about her interest, she was often the first person called when appropriate collectibles were up for sale.

Among Walthall's more unusual items are a water jug made from a camel's stomach and an intricately carved Zulu tray. She also has 45 Black Barbie dolls, a Black Little Mermaid doll, and several Black Lladro figurines. Last Christmas every ornament on her tree had a Black theme.

Walthall teaches a multicultural unit to all the first graders in her school. The highlight of the program is a field trip to her home to see her goodies. "The youngsters love to look at everything," says Walthall. "My collection—plus the fact that students usually don't get into a teacher's home—makes the visit memorable for them."

Mr. Baldwin Goes to Washington

"It's nice to be remembered," says Hamilton Terrace Learning Center Principal and NEA member **John Baldwin**. "Particularly when the person doing the remembering is the President of the United States."

It was actually Hillary Rodham Clinton who first met Baldwin when she toured the Shreveport, Louisiana, alternative school where he works. Clinton was so impressed by the program there, she invited Baldwin to Washington.

Baldwin was one of about 50 people who got a private tour of the White House, tickets to an Inaugural Ball, and a luncheon with the Clintons and Gores.

At the luncheon, Baldwin chatted with others who'd overcome adversity and made a difference. They included a cab driver, a farmer, a social worker, an unemployed auto worker, and a former drug addict.

Baldwin believes the Clintons were impressed with the initiative he showed in getting local support for his alternative program to help kids succeed and assist adults in getting off welfare.

Jeff Simon

RESOURCES

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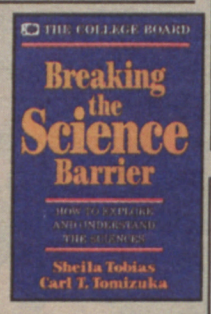
SCIENCE



Breaking the Science Barrier: How To Explore and Understand the Sciences. Sheila Tobias and Carl T. Tomizuka. Shows sophisticated high school and college students the kinds of study and thinking required in science courses. 164 pp. $14. From booksellers or by mail (add $2.95 p&h) from College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, NY 10101-0886.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

School's Out—It's Summer! Joan M. Bergstrom. Aimed at helping parents plan summer projects for their children, the book is useful also to teachers who would suggest ideas to parents. 84 pp. $7.95 plus $2.50 p&h. From booksellers or from Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707 800/841-2665.

READING

Postcards from America Series: ***High Time in New York, San Francisco Adventure, Trouble in the Black Hills, White House Mystery,*** and ***Windy City Whirl***—all by Penn Mullin. Short stories at second grade reading level (suitable also for older students with reading difficulties) give the basic facts about five major U.S. tourist sites. 44 pp. each. $15, the five-book set plus $2.50 p&h. High Noon Books, 20 Commercial Blvd., Novato, CA 94949-6191.

Shared Reading in the Middle and High School Years. Frank McTeague. Shows how cooperative learning can transform a literature class from a collection of private readers to a community of readers, writers, and talkers. 94 pp. $13.50 plus $3.50 p&h. Heinemann, 361 Hanover St., Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912.

ART/MULTICULTURAL

Multicultural Art Print Series. Getty Center for Education in the Arts. 18' x 24' laminated, ready-to-hang full color posters with art historical and biographical material on the artist on the reverse side. Five-poster sets with teachers guides are available for African-American (CP-6011), Pacific-Asian (CP-6012), Mexican-American (CP-6016), and American Indian (CP-6017) art. Each five-poster set, $30. Also, 10-poster series (African American and Pacific Asian, CP-6010) *or* Mexican American and American Indian, CP-6018), $52 each. Both series (20 posters, CP-6019), $98. (The painting shown, "Hope Street: Church Mothers" by Marie Johnson-Calloway, is from the African-American set.) To order or to obtain free catalog, phone Crystal Productions, 800/255-8629.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Integration of Students with Special Needs into Regular Classrooms: Policies and Practices That Work. NEA. Shows how teachers are successfully integrating students with special needs—particularly the learning disabled—into regular classrooms. Regular and special education teachers helped develop this report 66pp. Stock no. 1861-3-00-FF. NEA members, $5.95; nonmembers, $15.95. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516, 800/229-4200, FAX 203/933-5276.

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SOUNDING BOARD

Searching For Answers

By Susan Adler

Recently, I gained notoriety when I was assaulted by a student. A nearby teacher was having trouble with a disruptive student, and I was called in to help.

The student turned her attention to me, beating me with her fists and calling me every four-letter word in the book. I had gotten hold of her leather coat, where I believed she had hidden a knife.

At the end of the melee, no knife surfaced. It turned out that one reason the girl was in a frenzy was that she had received the coat from her "pimp" and was terrified of losing it.

The shoddy details of the girl's life were buried in the media coverage of the assault. All the news media placed enormous emphasis on the aggressive action against me, rather than on the causes of the disruptive, violent behavior.

Overnight I became a famous "victim." My telephone rang constantly with requests for interviews, filmings, and speaking engagements. I was asked such questions as, "Do you feel frightened teaching in the inner city?" and "Do you think metal detectors and police patrolling would solve some of the violent outbreaks?"

For years I'd wanted to speak out in defense of children in need. This prompting from media sources opened the door for me to be on stage—front and center.

Letters I wrote were published in the *Nashville Tennessean* and the Tennessee Education Association *Forum*. News articles contained my comments, and radio reports included my voice. Turn on the 6 o'clock news, and there was my face.

At each media opportunity I was offered, I spoke repeatedly of the need for special intervention techniques like conflict resolution training and mediation to curb violence.

As an experienced inner-city educator who's survived assault, I know that we need to step in and defuse conflicts *before* they erupt into major fights resulting in suspensions, expulsions, and often, injuries and deaths.

One of the local news channels spent the entire day with my class and filmed student conflict mediations and our special group session "Heart to Heart." Through this biweekly group, the children have learned to place trust in each other and to talk out feelings in total honesty. Peer mediation, conflict resolution, and cooperative learning are central to the program.

Together my students solve problems and help each other cope with those that seem "unsolvable." During these groups, I am no longer the teacher, just a group member.

The television program aired in January, and public response was positive and encouraging. Viewers expressed interest in mediation as a deterrent to violence. They were also emotionally touched by the problems—drug abuse, prostitution, and homelessness—the children tearfully shared with their peers.

At Lockeland Middle School, where I teach, we are overwhelmed with children who need love, attention, and adults who are willing to listen to them. We need smaller classes to deal with these needs effectively.

We need the time and resources to teach children how to cope with tough situations, solve problems, and express pent-up anger and frustration without violence. Most of our students' behavior problems result from displaced anger and attention needs.

As teachers, we're trying to satisfy these needs by teaching life skills through conflict resolution and peer mediation, and, believe me, it works.

We find that few children are genuinely "bad." Most disruptive students are simply good children crying out for attention and help in the only way they know how.

"Trouble-makers" need attention, not neglect. They have learned to survive by self-protection and physical confrontation. We can help them learn other ways of coping in a violent world.

Instead of sitting in the teachers' lounge talking about how terrible Jeff is and how he drives us crazy, we need to realize that Jeff is a child reaching out to us as adults.

Instead of being tempted to "throw away" children who interfere with our daily plans, we, as teachers, need to be attuned to counseling techniques.

Peer mediation, conflict resolution, cooperative learning, and realistic teacher training in classroom management are essentials in all schools.

It's time we all open our eyes and accept the fact that we can't be teachers without, also, being counselors. The time spent working positively with student problems pays off in more time for academics.

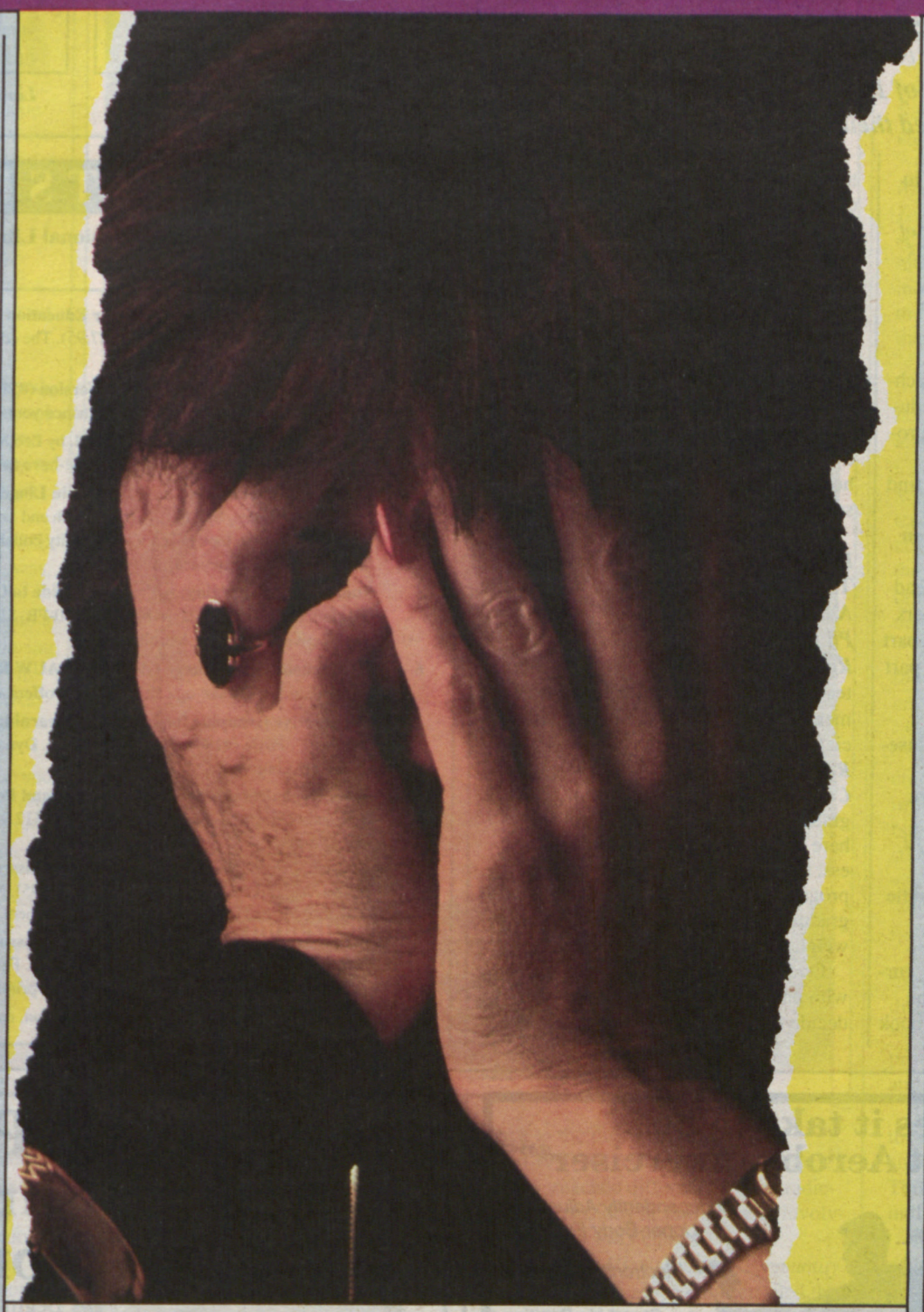
Violence is not prevented by policing and frisking students. It is not stopped by punishing perpetrators after the fact. The only solution to violence is to prevent it before it takes place.

For years, inner-city children from economically deprived backgrounds have been neglected, resulting in numerous problems, including escalated violence.

It's time our citizens, businesses, media, and school personnel take note: To minimize the discipline problems that often lead to violence, we need to concentrate on preventing the source of those problems, not just healing the wounds they cause.

We have two choices. We can sweep societal problems under the carpet and watch them intensify in violent outbreaks in our schools, or we can recognize student needs and try to help meet them.

Susan Adler teaches fifth grade at Lockeland Middle School in Nashville, Tennessee.



When Nashville teacher Susan Adler was assaulted in school, the media played up the attack for all it was worth. "Let's tone down the melodramatic headlines and focus on the root cause of the violence," Adler argues.

BOOK BEAT

The Roundup

Here's a trio of books that may speak to a situation you face in your corner of education. An NEA member reviewed each book, giving each an overall rating of 1 (don't bother) to 5(must read). Our three reviewers also added their comments.

Book: **Teachers: The Missing Voice in Education.** ***Marilyn M. Cohn and Robert B. Kottcamp.*** *State University of New York Press. 358 pp. Paper, $19.95.*
Reviewer: **Doug Tuthill,** philosophy teacher, St. Petersburg (Florida) High School
Rating: **4.**
Comments: A compelling story of teachers struggling against an oppressive education bureaucracy to maintain their professional dignity.

Now that Eastern Europe is free, I find myself wondering when teachers and students will finally be liberated. When will our Berlin Wall come down?

A cautionary note to Association leaders: The Dade County, Florida, teachers quoted in this book saw their union as part of the bureaucracy and consequently part of the problem.

Book: **Instructional Challenge: A Casebook for Middle Grade Educators.** ***Alexis L. Mitman and Vicki Lambert.*** *Far West Laboratory and California League of Middle Schools. 134 pp. $14.*
Reviewer: **Linda Rief,** language arts teacher, grades 7/8, Oyster River Middle School, Durham, N.H.*
Rating: **3-4**
Comments: Teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinators, especially at the middle school level, should read this book to gain a clearer understanding of four critical areas of curriculum and instruction: heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, active learning, and interdisciplinary instruction. The book includes some good examples of what these concepts look like across many disciplines.

*Rief's own book, *Seeking Diversity,* was reviewed here last month. She also has a chapter in *Portfolio Portraits,* edited by Donald H. Graves and Bonnie S. Sunstein (Heinemann). If she didn't think her contribution disqualified her, Rief says she'd give that book a *5!*

Book: **Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning A Master's or a Ph.D.** ***Robert L. Peters, Ph.D.*** *Noonday. 386 pp. $12.*
Reviewer: **Sue Walters,** certification teacher, Wells-Ogunquit CSD, Maine; member, Wells-Ogunquit Teachers Association.
Rating: **3+**
Comments: College students interested in graduate work will get excellent advice here on negotiating the application process, finding an adviser, completing a program. They'll learn how to plan for graduate work and whether benefits outweigh costs.

One problem: the book doesn't deal with part-time studies. Teachers who decide to pursue graduate work while working full-time face other issues. Completion of advanced degrees, especially the doctorate, may be very useful to teachers who want to become administrators.

Doug Tuthill

Linda Rief

Sue Walters

NEA BESTSELLERS

The NEA Professional Library's Top 10

Current Rank		August 1992
1	**NEA Federal Income Tax Guide for Education Employees** (Tax Year 1992), by John C. Arch (#2215-7-00-FB, $7.95). The educator's guide to a less taxing April 15.	4
2	**Public Education Leaflets-English Version** (#5198-X-3S-FB, $34.95). Thirty-five reproducible leaflet masters to enhance your community outreach.	
3	**Countdown to the First Day of School,** by Leo M. Schell and Paul Burden (#2150-9-00-FB, $4.95). A must-have for new teachers.	
4	**Children of Promise: Literate Activity in Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classrooms,** by Shirley Brice Heath and Leslie Mangiola (#1844-3-00-FB, $8.95). A how-to look at school-university collaborations on the cross-grade, multi-lingual, literacy learning frontier.	10
5	**Student Team Learning: A Practical Guide to Cooperative Learning. Third Edition,** by Robert E. Slavin (#1845-1-00-FB, $18.95). A down-to-earth approach to effective cooperative learning.	1
6	**How Schools Shortchange Girls (The AAUW Report)** (#2501-6-00-FB, $16.95). More than just a wake-up call, this report offers an action plan.	
7	**Cooperative Grouping for Interactive Learning,** by Lawrence Lyman and Harvey C. Foyle (#1842-7-00-FB, $11.95). Dynamic ways to build change-inducing groupings.	2
8	**Team Organization: Promise, Practices, and Possibilities,** by Thomas O. Erb and Nancy M. Doda (#3075-3-00-FB, $12.95). A perfect step-by-step guide for schools.	9
9	**At-Risk, Low Achieving Students in the Classroom,** by Judy Brown Lehr and Hazel Wiggins Harris (#3338-8-00-FB, $9.95). No miracles, but this book covers over 100 practical ideas for improvement.	6
10	**Learning Centers for Child-Centered Classrooms,** by Janice Pattillo and Elizabeth Vaughan (#0357-8-00-FB, $15.95). Facilitate active learning with these complete sample plans for pre-primary and primary learning activities.	17

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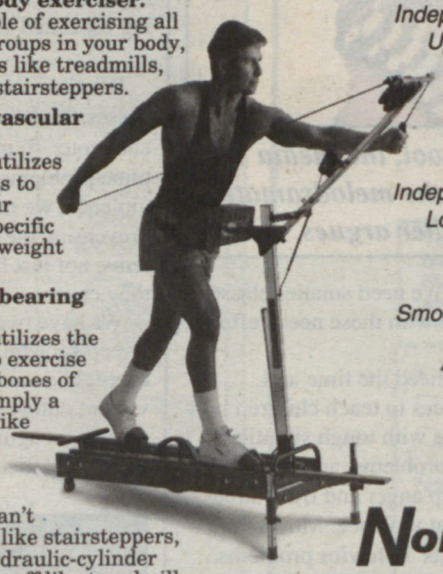

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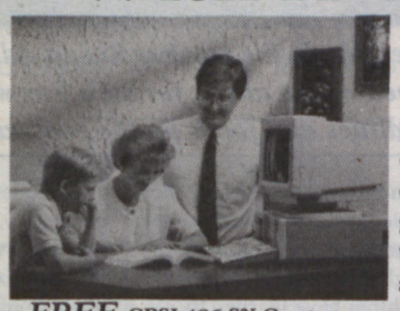
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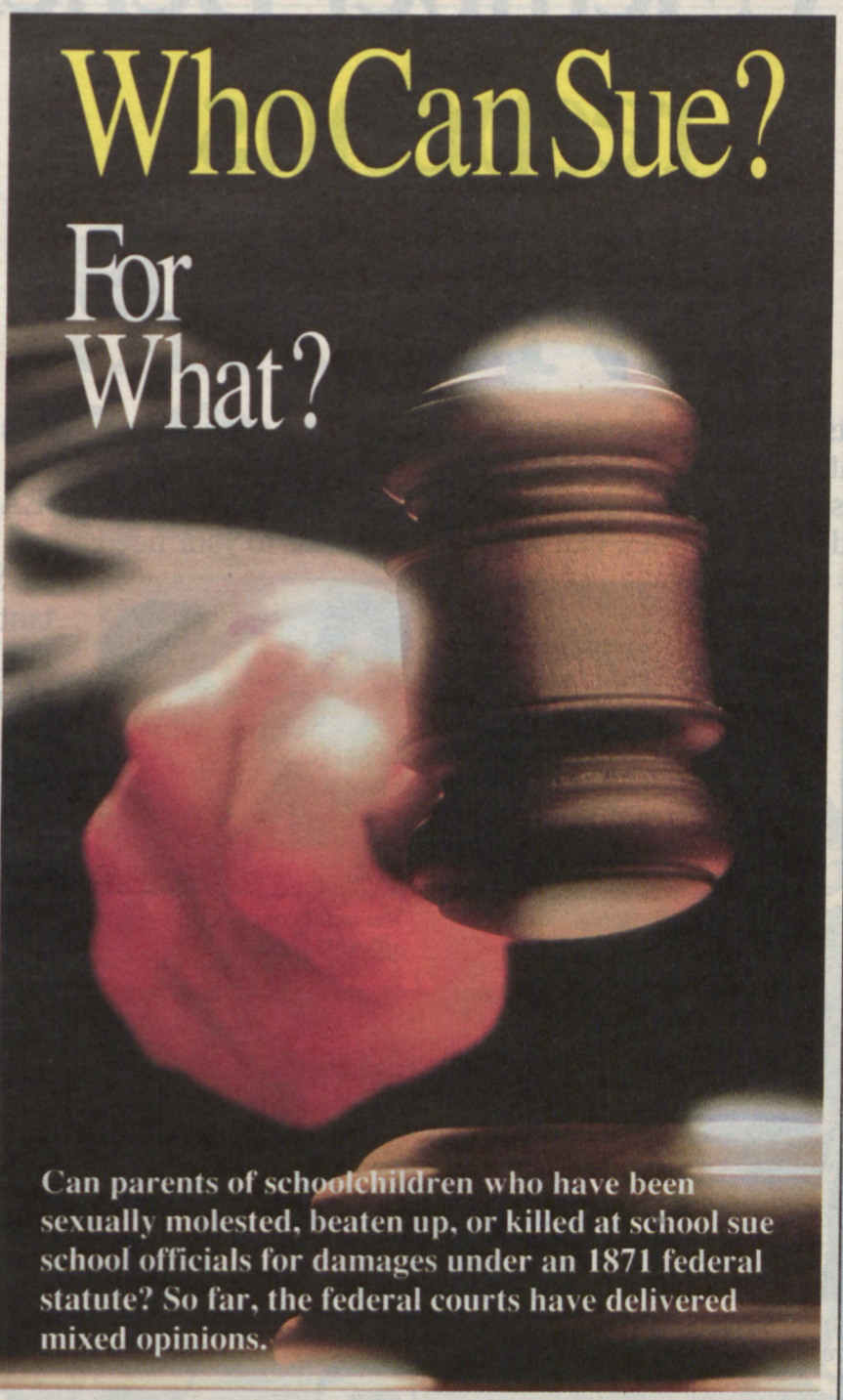
LEGAL TIMES

Who Can Sue? For What?



Can parents of schoolchildren who have been sexually molested, beaten up, or killed at school sue school officials for damages under an 1871 federal statute? So far, the federal courts have delivered mixed opinions.

Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act of 1871 allows citizens to sue government officials for violating their constitutional rights.

In a recent trend, students and their parents are arguing in federal court that the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to a safe school environment and that student victims of school violence can sue under Section 1983.

In the handful of recent decisions on the issue, the courts are going both ways. To date, the Supreme Court has refused to enter the fray, and the lower federal courts disagree about how the issue should be resolved.

The leading case is *Doe v. Taylor (Texas) Independent School District*, decided last October by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The plaintiff, "Jane Doe," in her lawsuit that a married high school biology teacher and coach named Lynn Stroud wooed and finally seduced her in 1987, when she was a 15-year-old high school freshman.

Their sexual relationship lasted for six months and, according to the court, was "common knowledge" in the high school community. Stroud took Doe to a rock concert, took her out to lunch during the school day, bought her alcohol. He even escorted her to a school basketball game.

One of Doe's classmates found a Valentine from Stroud to Doe and turned it over to school principal Eddy Lankford. On the card, Stroud had written: "To my most favorite, prettiest, sweetest, nicest sweetheart in the world! Please don't change cause I need you. I'm in love with you. Forever—for real—I love you."

Lankford's response was to transfer the classmate out of Stroud's class. According to the court, "Lankford acknowledged that he was aware of rumors concerning Doe and Stroud but indicated that Stroud just had a way of flirting with the girls."

Doe's parents also found photographs of Stroud among their daughter's belongings. He'd inscribed them, "Don't ever leave me" and "I love you." Doe's parents immediately went to the school superintendent, Mike Caplinger, who called Doe in for a meeting. When both Doe and Stroud denied any sexual involvement, Caplinger ceased any investigation.

Several months later, the parents found more love letters from Stroud, and Doe admitted the sexual involvement. Stroud resigned and later pled guilty to criminal charges arising out of the relationship.

Doe then sued the school district, Caplinger, Stroud, and Lankford, asserting various claims under state law, as well as a Section 1983 claim that her constitutional right to due process had been violated. Prior to trial, Caplinger and Langford asked to have the case against them dismissed, arguing that they couldn't be held liable for Stroud's misconduct.

An angry court of appeals flatly rejected their argument. "You would think it indisputable," the court said, "that a school superintendent and a school principal, once aware that such reprehensible conduct was taking place on their campus, would have not only a moral duty, but also a legal duty, to stop it—that the Constitution would not tolerate their looking the other way or taking only meager measures to protect a 14-year-old schoolgirl from being sexually abused by [a teacher]."

Compulsory attendance laws create a special relationship between the minor student and the state, the court held. "By removing the child from his home," school officials must "shoulder the burden of protecting the child from foreseeable trauma."

The due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, the court concluded, encompasses "the right not to be sexually molested," and school officials themselves can be found liable for such acts perpetrated by teachers whom they supervise, "if they know or should be aware of the transgressions, yet consciously choose not to put an end to them."

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to review the decision, sending the case back to the district court for trial.

In 1990 two other federal appellate courts, reached different and contradictory conclusions in similar cases involving Section 1983 claims.

In *J. O. v. Alton (Illinois) Community School District*, seven children sued the Alton School District, the school superintendent, and the principal of the middle school they attended, alleging that they had been sexually molested by a teacher.

The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed their case, holding that the school officials didn't have an "affirmative duty to provide for their safety and to prevent the child abuse that occurred in this case."

The due process clause of the Constitution, the court said, "is not a guarantee of certain minimal levels of safety and security" at school.

In *Doe v. Special School District of St. Louis County (Missouri)*, the Eighth Circuit rejected the Section 1983 claims filed against various school officials by a dozen children who alleged that they had been molested by a school bus driver.

At the same time, the court suggested that the school officials could be held liable if plaintiffs could show that they had (1) received notice that the bus driver had engaged in a "pattern" of abuse, (2) demonstrated "deliberate indifference to or tacit authorization of" the acts of abuse, and (3) failed to take "sufficient remedial action."

The courts also are divided on whether school officials can be held liable under Section 1983 for injuries inflicted on students by other students.

The two plaintiffs in *D. R. v. Middle Bucks Area (Pennsylvania) Vocational Technical School* were female high school students who claimed that for five months they were repeatedly sexually molested by a group of male students in the bathroom and darkroom adjacent to the graphic arts classroom.

While admitting that "no one could help but be shocked by the factual allegations in this case," the Third Circuit held last year that none of the school defendants (including the student teacher in charge of the class) could be held liable under Section 1983 because they didn't owe "plaintiffs a constitutional duty to protect them from the misconduct of [other] students."

The plaintiff in *Lopez v. Houston Independent School District* was beaten unconscious by other students while riding home in a school bus.

The Fifth Circuit ruled that the plaintiff couldn't sue the bus driver's supervisors or the school district under Section 1983 but could sue the bus driver if he could show that the driver's failure to take action to stop the fight or to provide emergency aid showed "callous indifference" for the student's safety.

Finally, in *Pagano v. Massapequa (New York) Public Schools*, a federal district court allowed a sixth grader to sue various school officials for failing to protect the student from repeated physical and verbal abuse by other students.

The plaintiff allegedly had complained to school officials about 17 separate attacks, but the officials did nothing. This, the court said, showed "deliberate indifference."

This spate of lawsuits has had an adverse impact on liability insurance coverage for school districts.

According to the National School Boards Association, National Union Fire Insurance, one of the major companies that provides liability insurance for school districts, will raise its premiums 30 or 35 percent this summer and drop coverage for damages and attorneys fees in sexual harassment cases involving bodily harm, such as rape cases.

Under NEA's Educators Employment Liability Policy, all NEA members are covered for claims up to $1 million against them for damages and attorneys' fees arising out of their employment activities.

The policy, which kicks in after any insurance available through the school district, doesn't cover intentional wrongdoing, and there is a $250,000 limit for civil rights cases.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

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TFA043

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

A SECOND LOOK AT

The rules for withdrawing money from tax-deferred retirement plans—in particular 403(b) annuity plans—are so complex that even many experts admit they have not sorted them all out.

If you're putting your money into a tax-deferred account, make a serious effort to understand the rules of withdrawal. If you make a mistake, the penalties are severe.

"This is a very murky area," acknowledges Seymour Goldbert, a professor of law and taxation at Long Island University and also the author of *A Professional's Guide to the IRA Distribution Rules* (New York: Foundation for Accounting Education, 1992.)

Understanding the IRS rules is important, but the contracts for many individual 403(b) plans impose withdrawal rules and expenses that are even more stringent. If your plan does that, you must abide by its rules. And a 403(b) plan can be subject to withdrawal expenses charged by the company as well as tax penalties imposed by the IRS.

The best time to check on the withdrawal rules of your 403(b) tax-deferred annuity contract is before you put your money in. Once you've set up the plan, you may have to pay a surrender fee to get out of it. Here are the Internal Revenue Service rules for withdrawals. Check your contract—or, better, the contract you're considering—to see how it compares.

Money that's contributed to a 403(b) annuity can be withdrawn—

- ► without penalty when you reach age 59-1/2
- ► without penalty if you die (your beneficiary can take the money).
- ► without penalty if you become disabled.
- ► with a 10 percent penalty if you have a financial hardship. "Financial hardship" hasn't been strictly defined. It might, for example, include the threat of eviction from your home. There are restrictions on when and how much money you can contribute if you've made a hardship withdrawal.
- ► when you leave your job. But although the IRS allows this, the company that sold you the 403(b) plan may not, according to Andy Anderson, a partner at Hewitt Associates, benefits consultants in Lincolnshire, Illinois.

Even if your 403(b) plan allows you to withdraw the money when you change jobs, you should be aware of a new law that took effect January 1, 1993. It requires the company that holds your 403(b) to withhold 20 percent of it as federal tax, unless you have the money transferred directly to a new 403(b) plan or to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

That means it's absolutely imperative to arrange for a direct transfer if you don't want to lose a big chunk of your retirement savings to taxes now. (NEA Member Benefits has produced a Financial Awareness Bulletin on this topic. For a free copy, call 800/637-4636.)

When withdrawal rules for 403(b) plans were brought into line with those for the later 401(k) plans, chiefly through the Tax Reform Act of 1986, some exceptions were made for money that was already in a 403(b) plan.

These exceptions give you an opportunity to take advantage of the more liberal rules—provided that you know them, and that you keep track of the money contributed before the rules changed.

Prior to the Tax Reform Act of 1986, participants weren't penalized for withdrawing money they'd put into 403(b) plans. Says Anderson: "You could waltz in and take that money as you liked, provided you paid the tax."

The 1986 act prohibited these withdrawals but "grandfathered" money that was already in the plans by December 31, 1988. Notes Anderson: "Grandfathering" is a term, often used when laws change, that means some people are exempted from new laws under certain circumstances.

"You still have a broader ability to take out any money you put in up to that date," says Anderson, even though the 1986 Act imposed a 10 percent penalty on these withdrawals. And, again, you can profit from this rule only if your plan allows it.

The other change made by the 1986 tax act concerns the age at which you must begin taking withdrawals. Initially, there were no age requirements for withdrawals from 403(b) plans.

In 1973, the IRS said that more than 50 percent of the money must be taken out during a participant's lifetime. Actuarial tables were drawn up that provided a framework for withdrawals, but there was no mandatory starting point, according to IRS spokesperson Henry Holmes.

In the late 1970s, IRS actuaries informally agreed that age 75 "might be a good starting point," says Holmes. But that age was never introduced into formal regulations.

Anderson says he works with clients who begin mandatory withdrawals at even later ages—80 or even 85—arguing that they'll still be able to withdraw 50 percent of the money during their lifetimes. This only applies to the account balance as of Dec. 31, 1986.

The 1986 tax act decreed that money in the 403(b) plans must be withdrawn beginning at age 70-1/2, as is the case for 401(k) plans, IRAs, and other retirement money. However, public school, government, and church employees were exempted from this rule starting in November 1989.

This exemption was made retroactive to 1986. It provides that employees who continue to work in public school, government, or church jobs need not withdraw "new money" (money contributed after January 1, 1987) until they reach age 70-1/2 or retire, whichever is later.

Abraham Froehlich, who'll be 72 in June, teaches psychology at Nassau Community College in Garden City, L.I. He's not withdrawing any money from his 403(b) plans. He says he doesn't need to withdraw the "old money" until age 75, and he doesn't need to withdraw the "new money" until he retires.

If Froehlich keeps working after he's 75, it's unclear whether he'll have to begin withdrawing anything. "We've never had to answer the question: What will happen to the 'old money' if someone works past age 75?" says Holmes.

—Mary Rowland

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TRENDS

Elementary Teaching: For Women Only?

The proportion of elementary school teachers who are men has plummeted to the lowest point in 25 years, according to NEA Research. Only 12 percent of the country's 1.4 million elementary teachers are men, down from a 1981 high of nearly 18 percent.

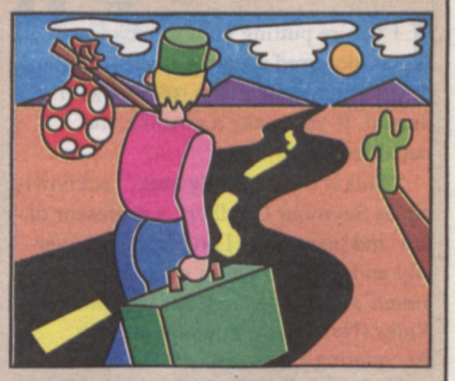
One reason for the drop is economic—the recession has made pay, never high in the lower grades and kindergarten, more important than ever. The lower salary still affects men's ability to choose primary grade teaching.

Small Is Beautiful?

Thinking of chucking big-city living? If you're looking for a nice little town, check out *The 100 Best Small Towns in America*, a $12 book just published by Prentice Hall.

If safety's a great concern, consider Bolivar, Missouri, with the lowest crime rate among the 100 small towns (populations range from 5,000 to 15,000 people) surveyed. Compare Bolivar's rate of 341 per 100,000 people with the nationwide average of 5,242 per 100,000.

Looking for a highly educated community? Try Nevada, Iowa. One-third of its residents have 16 or more years of schooling—twice the national proportion. And for generous spending on education, note Douglas, Wyoming's per child expenditure of $1,012—more than twice the $451 national average.



Back to the Future

A multigenerational look at child poverty says conditions for children could regress to pre-war levels—pre-War on Poverty, that is. A recently released report by the Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, warns that the child poverty rate could increase from 21.8 percent to 28.5 percent during the next two decades.

If policies are left unchanged, the number of poor children will rise from the current 14.3 million to 20.7 million in the year 2012, the Center predicts—but effective federal policies could virtually eliminate child poverty in the next 18 years.

The impact of public policy on childhood poverty is clear. In the 1960s, notes the report, Johnson's War on Poverty cut the number of poor children from 17.6 million to 9.7 million—a 45 percent drop. The legacy of the Reagan/Bush years, when the economy worsened and many programs for families and children were axed, shows up in the rise in the numbers of poor children.

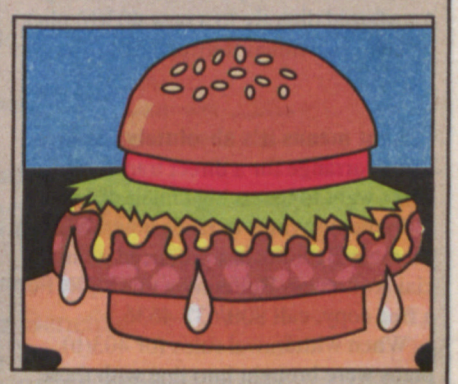
Bust the Burgers

School lunches have too much salt and fat and not enough nutritional value, says the Center for Science in the Public Interest, analyzing a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture survey.

The Center was especially critical of school lunches, noting that in some areas schools have no choice but to serve what the government distributes. One example: schools are required to serve whole milk, despite its high fat content.

Countering the Center's criticism, USDA officials maintained that schools have been reducing the fat and salt content of their lunches.

"What we're trying to do," notes one USDA official, "is serve nutritious meals that kids will eat."



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TMM043

INTERNATIONAL

Oh Canada! How's Your Health Care?

Canadian teachers join those who say it's working.

As health insurance premiums and medical bills eat steadily away at U.S. families' standard of living, more and more people are talking about the "Canadian plan"—also known as "single- payer" health care.

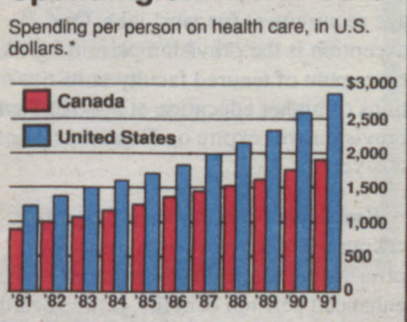
They note first that the single-payer approach, recently endorsed by NEA (see page 33), saves money. Cutting out health insurance companies and a lot of paperwork connected with claims, Canada in 1991 spent (in U.S. dollars) $1,915 per person for health care. That year the U.S. spent $2,868—and still 37 million people had no health insurance.

Can you really get quality health care that cheap? Or is there a catch? Are Canadians limited to certain doctors, say, or left to suffer long waits for treatment? What's the Canadian plan look like from Canada?

British Columbia school counselor Shelley Fowler, who's recovering from cancer, says, "I feel very well served by our health care system, and I didn't have to make any decisions based on my pocketbook."

Spending on Health Care

Spending per person on health care, in U.S. dollars.*



*Canadian figures represent gross domestic product purchasing power parity, provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Sources: Health Information Division, Health and Welfare Canada; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Canadian plan works very simply. Doctors charge the province a fee for each service they provide. Each provincial doctors association negotiates the fee schedule with the provincial health care agency. Most hospitals are private and nonprofit.

Just 3 percent of Canada's health care costs go to administration of the plan. In the U.S., administrative costs take 15 percent of health expenditures. Canada spends 8.7 percent of its Gross National Product on health care, while the U.S. spends 11.8 percent.

A study by the General Accounting Office of the U.S. Congress found that Canadian waiting lists for elective surgery and diagnostic tests can be several months long. But when immediate care is necessary, the picture changes. In a recent survey by the Canadian national statistical agency, 95 percent of Canadians said they get needed care within 24 hours.

Canadians get to choose their own doctors. Period.

And the bottom line: Canadians are healthy. The health care plan is probably not the only reason Canadians have a life expectancy of 77.1 years, but it's certainly a contributing factor. People in the U.S. can expect to live 75.3 years.

Canada's single-payer apporach also may not entirely explain why the infant mortality rate in Canada is 7.9, while the rate in the U.S. is 10.4. Or why the heart attack death rate is 348 per 100,000 people in Canada and 434 per 100,000 people in the U.S. A health care system clearly plays some part in such statistics.

So Canadians aren't worried about defects in the Canadian Plan, but they are worried about the Canadian Plan's future. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who submitted his resignation last month, has cut federal support for the provincial plans from 50 percent to 30 percent.

As a result, the provincial health care agencies are scrambling to keep citizens healthy without running up huge deficits. Canadians anxiously await the results.

"We Canadians may complain about taxes," Shelley Fowler sums up, "but when I think about what we get, I don't complain too loudly. I wouldn't want to see anything happen to our medical system."

—Jane Power

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LOOKING AHEAD TO RETIREMENT

Victimized By Age

Whether you're looking forward to a few more years of teaching, counting the days 'till retirement, or already retired, age discrimination laws are on your side.

Every day, thousands of older workers and job seekers are victims of age discrimination. They're fired, forced to resign, denied training, passed over for promotions, and not hired simply because of their age.

All such practices are illegal under the federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). Passed more than 25 years ago, the landmark legislation protects workers age 40 and older from age discrimination in all aspects of employment.

Since passage of the ADEA, Congress has taken two major steps to further protect older workers. In 1986, Congress abolished a mandatory retirement age for all but a few specific job categories. And, in 1990, Congress prohibited employers from denying benefits—like health insurance—to older workers.

But despite these protections, age discrimination is no stranger in offices, factories, even schools. Take, for example, the case of NEA member Naomi Smith, a retired elementary school teacher from San Jose, California.

In 1984, at the age of 64, Smith suffered a disabling injury on a school playground and was unable to work for nearly two years.

During the first year of her convalescence, Smith received sick pay and differential pay (the difference between a substitute's salary and her salary, it kicks in after 10 days of sick leave). But then the compensation ran out, and she applied to the State Teachers Retirement System for disability benefits.

"I thought, this is the thing that people do when they're ill," Smith says. "But I was told that only persons age 60 or younger were eligible for disability benefits. To qualify for any benefits, I would have had to retire, apply for retirement benefits, then return to work when I was able.

"But I didn't want to retire. So I waited several months, used up all my savings—and finally was forced to retire."

Several months later, when Smith was fully recovered and ready to go back to work, she discovered that her former employer, the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District, had terminated her employment and hired a permanent replacement.

With the support of the California Teachers Association, Smith filed an age discrimination lawsuit against the district and the state retirement system.

The suit alleged that the denial of disability benefits to those over age 60 was discriminatory and conflicted with federal law, which prohibits forced retirement on the basis of age. A state appeals court ruled in Smith's favor and awarded her back benefits.

Since her retirement, Smith has been unable to find work, even though she's specially trained to teach children with dyslexia and speech problems.

"It's difficult to get any type of job when you're over 60," she says. "People want you to volunteer your skills—to give them away for free—but they don't want to hire you."

Smith's story is typical of the insidious and sometimes illegal discrimination that's practiced against an ever-growing number of older workers and job applicants.

In 1991, the number of age bias claims filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) jumped 20 percent—to 29,000—after holding steady for several years.

The reason, according to experts on elder law, is the graying of the American workforce, coupled with a decade of corporate downsizings that have resulted in a wave of layoffs and early retirements among older workers.

Within education, discriminatory hiring policies are difficult to prove. But studies have shown that in public school systems, a disproportionate share of new hires are young teachers with little or no experience and salaries much lower than those of veteran teachers.

Some school systems don't set out to discriminate against older job seekers—rather, they try to stretch their limited budgets by hiring the least expensive applicants.

Whether that practice is intentional or not, that policy discriminates against older job applicants.

Other schools take a different route by encouraging older teachers to retire.

"It's a practice that school districts are using in California," says Beverly Tucker, associate executive director and chief counsel to the California Teachers Association.

"For instance, an older teacher might be transferred from a teaching assignment held for many years to an assignment that's much more difficult. It's a subtle way of saying, 'It's time to leave.'

"Such practices usually stem from a desire to get rid of teachers who are high on the salary scale and bring in teachers at the bottom of the scale," Tucker notes.

"Unfortunately, these types of cases are very hard to prove. Most of them wind up being settled out of court. The teacher is returned to his or her original position or decides not to take the pressure of the new assignment and retires."

Under the ADEA, there's no mandatory age requirement for most jobs. One exception is the provision permitting the retirement of tenured faculty at institutions of higher education at age 70. That provision will expire on December 31 of this year.

Employers can, however, legally encourage older workers to retire by offering early retirement incentives—enhanced pension benefits, retiree health insurance, lump sum cash payments, and other benefits.

Under federal law, employee participation in early retirement incentive programs must be voluntary, meaning that employers can't threaten to terminate or demote an employee who doesn't accept an offer.

In the end, it comes down to knowing your rights and taking action if those rights are infringed. The law's there for your protection.

A variety of member benefits are available to NEA-R members through NEA-Retired and NEA Member Benefits. For more information on NEA Member Benefits programs, call toll free 800/637-4636.

If It Happens to You...

If you believe you're a victim of age discrimination on the job, you can file a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Here's how:

► First, contact your local Association and UniServ representative for help. There may be other people in your area who have experienced some type of age discrimination problem.

► To file a charge on your own, contact the local EEOC field office listed in the U.S. Government section of the phone book, or call 800/669-4000.

► When filing a charge with the EEOC, you must agree that your name can be given to your employer. If you don't want your name revealed, you can file a complaint—a confidential statement that someone has discriminated against you. But be aware that the EEOC gives lower priority to complaints than to charges. Also, if you eventually decide to file a lawsuit, you'll be required to file a charge with the EEOC first.

► A charge should be filed within 180 days of a discriminatory action. In states that have age discrimination laws (all except Alabama), the time limit to file an ADA charge is 300 days, although filing within 180 days is recommended. If you exceed the time limits, you may have a problem filing a suit. In any case, a lawsuit must be filed within two years of the discriminatory act.

► The EEOC usually will investigate a charge and try to get you and your employer to resolve the situation. If the Commission drops your case, you have the option of filing a lawsuit.

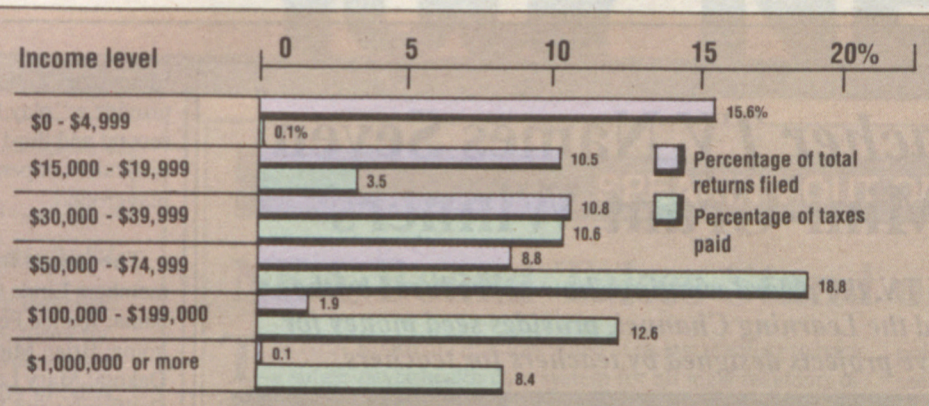
► Legal fees can be expensive. Most state Associations have some type of job-rights legal services program that helps to fund certain cases.

If you decide to hire a lawyer on your own, you can get names of attorneys who specialize in age discrimination cases, by contacting the National Employment Lawyers Association or local bar associations.

DATA BANK

The Taxman Cometh

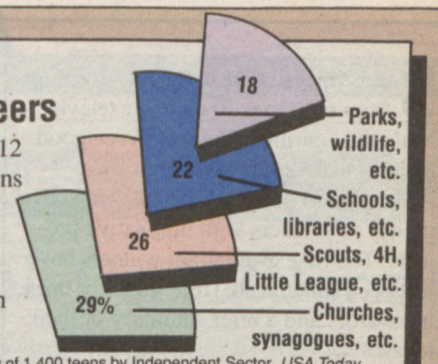
Prior to the proposed Clinton Administration reshuffling, here's who paid what in income taxes.



Source: Internal Revenue Service, 1989

Teen Volunteers

Where do 12 million teens put in 36 million volunteer hours each week?



Source: Survey of 1,400 teens by Independent Sector, *USA Today*

Care To Dance?

What are Americans' favorite cultural activities? A recent poll puts movies—no surprise—at the top of the list. The surprise is in our second choice.

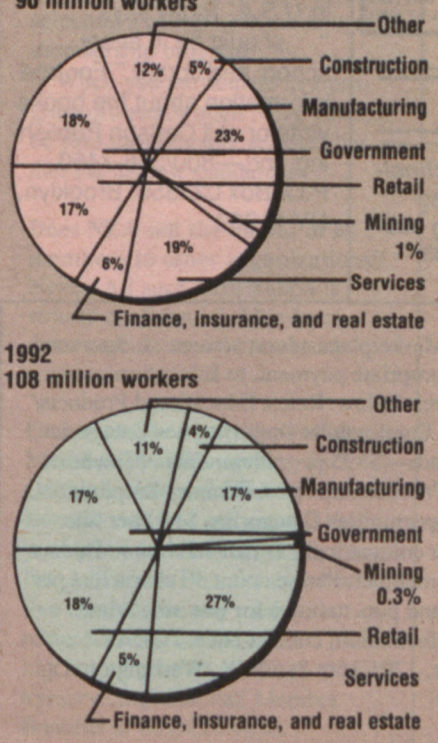
In the past year, percentage of people who:

Watched a movie	94%
Discussed philosophy, politics, history, or religion with friends or family	89
Read for pleasure	87
Watched public television	79
Saw a play, concert, ballet, or opera	47
Visited a museum or art gallery	46
Wrote for pleasure	31
Participated in a play or musical event	16

Source: National Cultural Alliance survey of 1,000 adults, October 1992

The Job Shift

Service sector jobs—at an average weekly wage of $333—have grown by 40 percent, while manufacturing jobs—at an average weekly wage of $455—have dropped 16 percent. Here's a look at how the mix has changed.

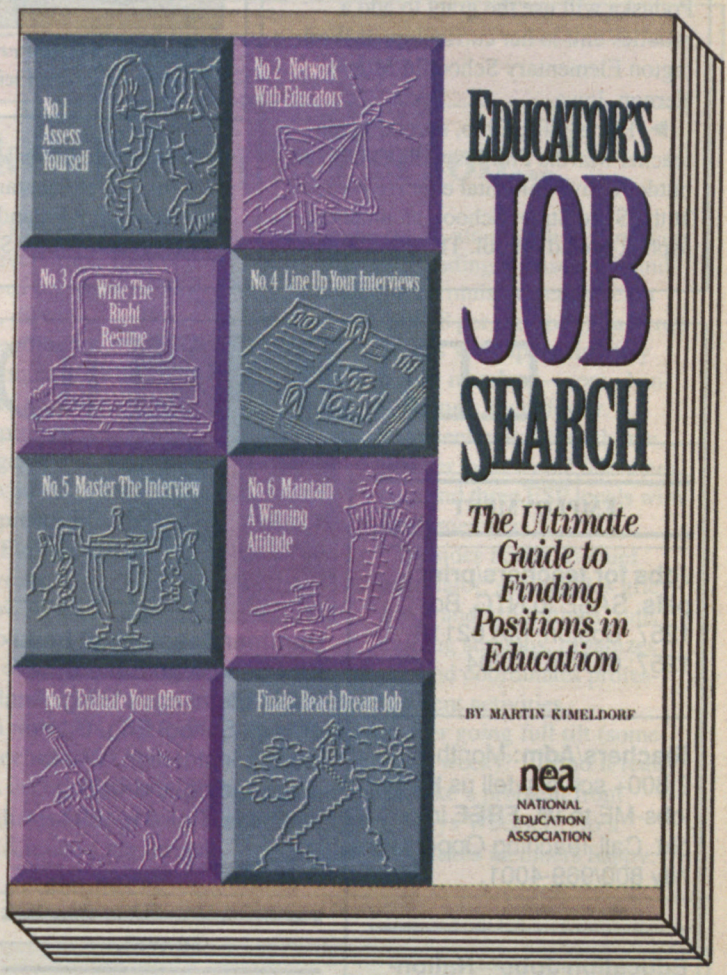


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *New York Times*

Get Your Dream Job!

Author, educator, Martin Kimeldorf ushers you past the classified-ad sections and job-placement boards that most educators rely on, through a few "back doors" that frequently lead to more interesting job opportunities. To help you get the job of your dreams, this handbook includes exercises on how to:

- **Identify and promote your educational job strengths**
- **Write an impressive resume**
- **Master job interviews**
- **Effectively maintain a job network**
- **Stay motivated, and**
- **Evaluate job offers**


No. 1 Assess Yourself
No. 2 Network With Educators
No. 3 Write The Right Resume
No. 4 Line Up Your Interviews
No. 5 Master The Interview
No. 6 Maintain A Winning Attitude
No. 7 Evaluate Your Offers
Finale: Reach Dream Job
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IDEA EXCHANGE

Teacher TV Names Seven Mini-Grant Winners

Teacher TV, ***the award-winning show coproduced by the NEA and the Learning Channel, provides seed money for innovative projects designed by teachers for teachers.***

Sure, you can tune in Sunday evenings from 6:00 to 6:30 on cable television's the Learning Channel to see good ideas in action. But there's more.

Teacher TV also awards $300 in seed money to teachers with innovative projects. The first seven grant winners have just been announced. Here's a list of these innovators and a brief summary of their ideas:

► In East Port Orchard School, Port Orchard, Washington, first grade teacher Beverly Godfrey will host a monthly family evening at her school. She'll offer parents hands-on experiences to help them teach their children to read.

► Theresa Finck, an elementary teacher at Sequoyah School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, will create a unit using music and speech to illustrate the differences and similarities among all cultures.

► Diane McClelland, of McKinley Elementary School in Colton, California, will use her grant money to help kindergarten students with limited English skills use computer technology.

► Fourth grade teacher Kathleen Poduska will use the grant to add a robotics unit to her curriculum at Washington Elementary School in Mount Vernon, Iowa.

► Painesville, Ohio, second grade teacher Martha Phillips will develop an outdoor environmental education center at the State Street School, an inner-city, asphalt-bound school. The lab will provide for an inquiry-based, hands-on program for 340 elementary students.

► Kenneth Kirkland, a music teacher at Waller Elementary School in Youngstown, Florida, will use computer programs to expand the students' knowledge of pitch and rhythm.

► A counselor at Perry (Michigan) Elementary School, Judie Schafer will provide a "play fair" support group for second and third graders who are having difficulty cooperating in the classroom or playground.

Carolyn Salisbury

A Teacher TV film crew shoots on location at Randolph Elementary in Arlington, Virginia. Pictured with his class is NEA member Rod Baer.

The judges for the grants were NEA members Linda Garrett, Dothan, Alabama; Joanne Fennell, Owasso, Oklahoma; Brian Midthun, Enderlin, North Dakota; Mary Lehmberg, Laguna Hills, California; and Ellen Cassidy, Haslett, Michigan.

The judges recently completed the second—and final— round of selections. Names of the winners will be announced in the near future.

Helping judge the grants that were submitted to* Teacher TV *were Linda Garrett (left), a school secretary in Dothan, Alabama, and Mary Lehmberg, an elementary teacher in Laguna Hills, California.

EDUCATION MARKETPLACE

EMPLOYMENT

Jobs for teachers/principals. SASE to NTC, Box 1257, Boston, MA 02118-1257; 617/267-3204.

Teachers/Adm: Monthly 2,800+ sch dist tell us their jobs-ME to VA. **FREE** info. pkt. Call Teaching Opportunity 800/969-4001.

Education Jobs—Nationwide. New lists weekly. All subjs & lvls. NESC, Dept. NEA, POB 1279, Riverton, WY 82501; 307/856-0170

SUMMER SESSIONS

Seattle Summer! Visit Seattle & the beautiful Northwest. College credit courses through Antioch University: Seattle Walk, Shakespeare at Ashland, San Juan Islands, Mt. Rainier, Lake Chelan, Olympics, Orca Cruise, Mt. St. Helens, Col. River Gorge, many in-city classes. 800/445-1305 for color catalog. Ext. SS.

Summer Sessions at beautiful San Diego State Univ. MA in Elementary Lang. Arts or High School Eng. Curriculum & Instruction. Week-long reading and writing institutes. Call 619/ 594-2990.

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Earn University Credit. USA or abroad. UCSB Extension, Travel Study, Santa Barbara, CA 93106; 800/325-2727.

Single's Vacations. Summer vacation trips for upscale single travelers. Call for brochure 800/331-2268.

Cruise Russia Moscow-St. Peterb. Travel study-cultural exchange. 3 credits. 800/ 477-1918 INTRES.

International Group Tours. Friendship Ambassadors, blazing trails to exciting spots since 1971. 800/526-2908 for info.

Hawaii-Kona-The Big Island. Condos & homes. Vanguard Vacation Rentals. 800/55-ALOHA.

Educators Bed & Breakfast Network. $25 per night for two. Private travel network. 1300+ locations. Box 5279, Eugene, OR 97405; 800/377-3480.

CONFERENCES

3rd Annual NCREST Conference: Building Learner-centered schools: Connecting Teaching, Learning, & Assessment May 21-22, 1993 at Teachers College Office of Cont. Prof. Educ., Box 132, Teachers Coll., Columbia Univ., NYC 10027; 212/678-3064.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Free Sample Issue: ***Technology & Learning,*** The magzine for technology-using educators. Call 800/543-4383.

PUBLICATIONS

Black Women's Encyclopedia—This just published splendid two-volume set has been praised in newspapers throughout the country. DeWayne Wickham in *U.S.A. Today* says ". . .should be in every school and library." For free information about the books write or call Carlson Publishing, Inc.—800/336-7460. P.O. Box 023350, Brooklyn, NY 11202.

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Your NEA

Q & A

For Members' Benefit

What is NEA Member Benefits?
NEA Member Benefits, formerly called NEA Special Services, is a wholly owned subsidiary of NEA.

What does NEA Member Benefits do?
NEA Member Benefits sponsors a broad range of products and services that give NEA membership extra value.

Each is designed to provide high quality and value supported by excellent service. Each is consistent with NEA's mission to improve the quality of life for members and their families.

How are the products and services selected?
Each product or service is chosen to appeal to the broadest possible base of members. The list ranges from various insurance products—life and homeowners' insurance, for example, to tax-deferred annuities, to credit cards, to NEA EdStar computers, to discounts on everyday purchases.

Does NEA make money on these products and services?
No. Any surplus revenue NEA gets from the companies that administer the various programs is returned to the members through lower prices and better services.

What's more, no dues dollars are ever used to promote NEA Member Benefits programs.

How can I be sure the companies selected are safe?
NEA Member Benefits goes through a rigorous process when selecting a company to administer a membership program.

When you participate in a program offered through NEA, you can be sure the company selected has met the highest standards.

Does NEA sell the names of its members to other organizations?
Never. All such information is strictly confidential. Members' names are never sold to outside companies.

Can a member get taken off the Member Benefits mailing list?
Certainly. Just call NEA Member Benefits toll free and request that your name be taken off the mailing list. A Member Benefits representative can remove any member's name for a particular product mailing, for all product mailings, or for teleservicing. Just call Member Benefits at 800/637-4636.

SPEAKING OUT ON THE ISSUES

NEA Board Takes Stand on Health Care Reform

The NEA Board of Directors voted at its last meeting to back a single-payer health care system for all legal residents of the United States.

"We must become active in the fight for health care reform," NEA President Keith Geiger told reporters. "Not only are NEA members suffering the consequences of rising health care costs by foregoing direct salary increases, but education funding is being squeezed by rising Medicaid costs."

Under a single-payer system, government would be the sole provider of health insurance or would be the sole payer of health care costs.

NEA's position on this hot political issue comes after extensive study by NEA leaders seeking to develop standards for NEA to use in evaluating health care reform proposals.

The new policy states that to gain NEA backing, a proposed health care reform must have quality health care and cost containment as equal top priorities.

In addition, a reform must guarantee universal access, cover preventive care, and put cost controls on all medical services.

The policy authorizes the Association to consider supporting health care reforms that do not create a single-payer system but move the nation closer to that goal.

IN HISTORY

Thirty years ago, President John F. Kennedy addressed the nation:

"The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North, and South, where legal remedies are not at hand. Redress is sought in the streets, in demonstrations, parades and protests which create tensions and threaten violence and threaten lives. We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the streets. It cannot be quieted by token moves or talk. It is a time to act in the Congress, in your state, and local legislative body and, above all, in all of our daily lives—"

The legislation, to which President Kennedy referred, became the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

WORKING FOR YOU

'It Takes a People Person...'

NEA UniServ Representatives wear a dozen hats every day. To do their jobs well, they need the skills of an organizer, trainer, diplomat, counselor, negotiator, lobbyist, and promoter. And the patience of a saint.

"It takes a people person," acknowledges Nancy Wheeler, who's been a UniServ representative in Seminole, Florida, for the past nine years. "You have to know when to talk and when to listen."

Tom Burton

Wheeler is one of 1,500 UniServ reps who provide a full range of services to NEA's 2.1 million members. The UniServ program, launched in 1970, is supported by NEA in cooperation with its state and local affiliates. This year, some $35 million of NEA monies are turned over to the states, along with $1.5 million for training. (Funding is based on annually changing formula currently set at $19.08 per member.) Each rep works with approximately 1,200 members—some handle more, some fewer.

Wheeler works with one teacher local with 2,000 members and three ESP locals with 1100 members.

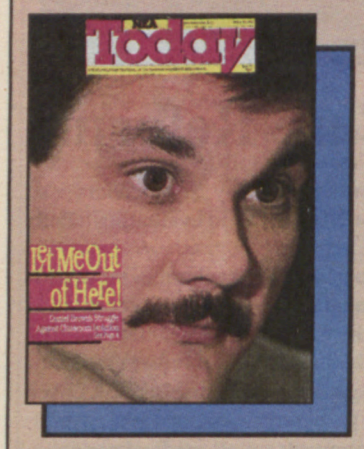
Besides acting as chief negotiator, she handles grievances and arbitrations, runs training sessions, organizes new members, and coordinates professional development activities.

What keeps her going full tilt (sometimes 70 hours a week)? "I find it really challenging to take a problem from ground zero," says Wheeler, "to a resolution that makes members happy."

SHORT TAKES

Censorship Support Network. If your curriculum, classroom materials, or books have been the target of censors, you have company. A special network of NEA members who have successfully warded off censorship attempts have volunteered to help those who are currently experiencing problems. To use the network, contact NEA staffer Paul Putnam, Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington DC 20036, 202/822-7721. . .**A Learning Opportunity.** NEA's National Center for Innovation is helping to organize two study-travel opportunities for educators, one to the Baltic republics, one to central Europe. The dates are July 9-26. For information, contact Sylvia Seidel at NEA Center 202/822-7906 for a brochure...**National Teacher Day** is May 4. All state and local Associations should have received a kit containing Teacher Day materials, including an Idea Starter Kit. This year's theme for the day is "Honoring Those Who Help Us Learn.". . .**Dropout Prevention Triumphs.** Two of the countless students NEA members have helped stay in school met Bill and Hillary Clinton at the White House recently and told those at the National Summit on Children and Families about the support they received to achieve school success. The two, Kymber Neal and Rubin Green, benefitted directly from NEA's national initiative with the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education to keep students in school. Launched in 1985 with your NEA dollars and implemented by NEA members nationwide, the dropout prevention program has helped thousands of students reach their potential. Kymber and Rubin were accompanied by their teachers, Marian Pritchett of Boise, Idaho, and Chris Gutierrez of Los Angeles.

Letters



Bored of Education?

Regarding your March cover story, you missed an opportunity for a really catchy title. You had it titled, "Let Me Out of Here: Daniel Brown's Struggle Against Classroom Isolation." It should have been titled, "Brown vs. Bored of Education."

J. Langlois
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

'Tarnished' Reputation

Your favorable feature on Carol Moseley Braun (Meet, March) points out the hypocrisy of the constant support that you give to liberal politicians.

In spite of her vocal support of Anita Hill, Braun, since her election, has failed to pursue the sexual harassment charges against her campaign manager and boyfriend. She has lived lavishly, jetting off to Africa for a month-long vacation, flying on the Concorde, and renting a $3,000-a-month penthouse.

Other charges against her include falsifying government documents to obtain Medicaid payments for her mother and using campaign money to buy expensive designer clothes. Salary due to some of her campaign aides was allegedly paid very late.

One can only wish that the first African-American woman to serve in the Senate were less tarnished in reputation.

E. V. Robeck
Tacoma, Washington

Wrong Persuasion

I strongly disagree with the viewpoint expressed in "Looking for a Safe Haven" by retired teacher Richard Gurney (Sounding Board, March). Gurney says teachers should help students discover their sexual identity by providing information and support—which I believe would encourage a homosexual lifestyle.

This is not a matter of homophobia on my part. On the contrary, it's just common sense. With the average life span of homosexual males at 42 years and the spread of AIDS in the gay and heterosexual communities, wouldn't it be wise to instead counsel these students on other issues?

These troubled students usually come from an unsupportive home environment, lack acceptance, approval, and affection from the same-sex parent, and are not accepted for their sensitive and caring natures. I realize this may be an over-generalization, but I base it on friendships I've had with gays and from discussions involving those I know of second-hand.

If psychologists are involved with students in any way, they can provide support and a "safe haven" by helping students to resolve these issues with parents.

As educators and as parents, we need to represent the truth to people and sensitize ourselves to the reasons for this behavior, help students deal with them, and resolve them.

I realize this opinion may be a departure from the general membership of NEA, but I have a strong suspicion it may be the feeling of many NEA members who may not be as vocal.

Jody Lee Collins
Renton, Washington

An Orphan on Orphanages

I just finished reading "Could It Be Time To Bring Back Orphanages?" (Debate, February). It left me wondering how much research and personal experience had gone into the preparation of the two viewpoints.

I was born in a mining town in Pennsylvania in 1925. My mother died during the birth of my younger brother, who also did not survive. I was two years old at the time. My father, an unskilled immigrant, tried to raise my three sisters and me by working in the Detroit factories. The strain was too much for him, and he suffered a mental breakdown.

My three sisters were placed in a girls' orphanage in Detroit, while I, at the age of three, was placed in a 50-boy orphanage in Jackson, Michigan. Both orphanages were run by the Felician Sisters, a Franciscan order.

The nuns survived by begging. Bakeries gave us their week-old bread (we would pull off the mold and soften the rock-hard loaves in the ovens). Begging trips to the neighboring farms kept us supplied with surplus vegetables and sometimes meat.

Clothing and shoes were always somebody's cast-offs. Doctors, dentists, and barbers volunteered their services. Holes in stockings and underwear were darned by the boys. Peanut butter on bread was only a Sunday treat (on weekdays, it was bread covered with lard). Few boys had visitors or gifts at Christmas.

We had a secure, highly structured childhood—adequate food, clothing, and shelter, but no emotional nourishment or bonding.

After 15 years, at the age of 18, I left the orphanage and worked in Detroit factories until I was drafted. With the help of the GI Bill, factory work, and selling Fuller brushes door-to-door, I earned a BA degree from the University of Detroit and a masters degree from the University of Michigan.

I moved to California and spent the next 30 years teaching band, chorus, orchestra, and classroom music on the elementary and middle school level. I am now retired, teaching privately part-time, and enjoying swimming, biking, gardening, and my obsession with the opera.

Of my five children, two are UC Berkeley graduates—one with a law degree; one is a Stanford grad; one is a UCLA grad; and one is at UC Santa Cruz. Even my wife went back to school after the kids were grown and earned her degree at St. Mary's College. (The kids worked their own way through those universities, I might add. On a one-teacher-salary household, there wasn't much left over.)

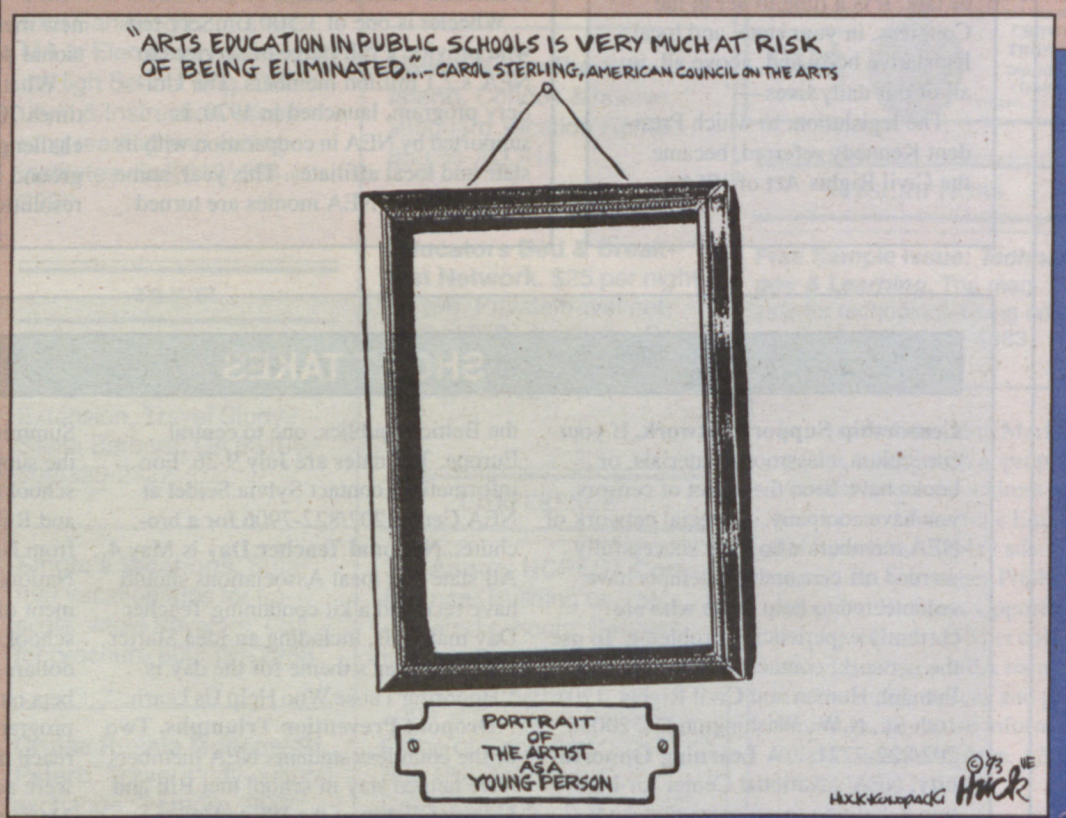
My sisters finished high school and were married soon after. Of their 12 children, only two turned out poorly.

In 1985, I flew to Detroit for a 40th-year reunion of boys from the orphanage. Surveying the group, I found the majority of them had spent their adult lives in Detroit factories. One or two others had gone on to college—one was Tom Monaghan, who amassed an $800 million fortune from his Domino's Pizza chain and owned the Detroit Tigers.

Now to get back to the debate, "Could It Be Time to Bring Back Orphanages?" I would like to place my solutions in order, from ideal to unacceptable.

- Two parents, one working, one full-time at home, at least until the kids are out of school
- Foster parents—strictly supervised
- Group homes with 7-10 kids
- Orphanages with 25-30 kids, strictly supervised, and well-funded
- Life on streets or in an abusive home.

John Urbanic
Watsonville, California


"ARTS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS VERY MUCH AT RISK OF BEING ELIMINATED..." - CAROL STERLING, AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE ARTS
PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG PERSON
©'93 HUCK
HUCKLEBERRY

Collective Bargaining

As a long-time life member of NEA, I am deeply troubled by Keith Geiger's comments (President's Viewpoint, February) that collective bargaining should be one of the pillars educational reform rests upon.

One need only look at General Motors and other large corporations to see the long-term damaging effects of collective bargaining. In the end, the "product" always loses.

It would be wonderful if the real aim of collective bargaining were a better product—that is, a better educated student—but in reality, that never happens. The primary focus and energy get directed at employee rights and working conditions; only self-serving rhetoric gets directed at improving the product.

The "islands of excellence" that Mr. Geiger refers to did not result from collective bargaining. They occurred because creative teachers and administrators "collectively" put their talents together to create a better way—a better "product."

Carl Koch
Fort Worth, Texas

Standardized Tests

I sympathize with Greta Plicka of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Letters, February). But I was also gratified to learn that someone else is as perplexed as I am about why we must give standardized tests.

Do you know of any learning theorists, developmentalists, or education researchers who believe these tests are in the best interest of students or learning? I don't.

I ask administrators why we must give them and they tell me that there will always be tests. Why? I conclude that the only reason we must give standardized tests is that it's the Department of Education's way of justifying disbursement of funds, which must be why no administrator wants to question it.

And if this is the case, then the whole system is based on fear and short-term solutions for long-term problems. And why are we educators letting bureaucrats and politicians run our schools?

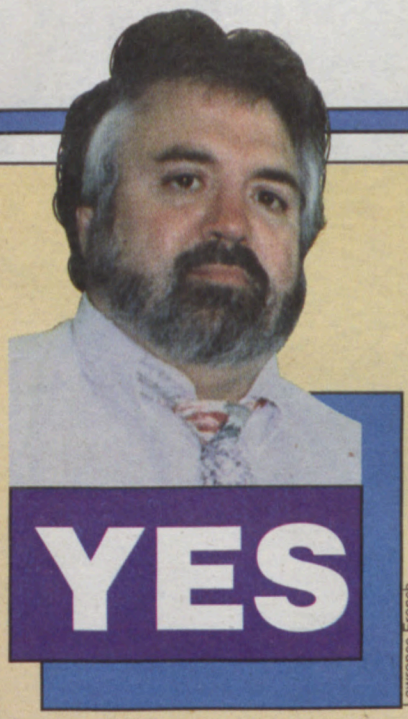
I'm with Plicka. Let's monitor schools on climate and positive atmosphere. Let's look at who wants to come to school every day and why, and who wants to stay in school.

Maybe we do need to get rid of standardized testing.

Susan Brophy
Princeton, New Jersey

Debate

Are School Boards Obsolete?



YES

Lawrence French

John Capsouras has taught business education at Parsippany (New Jersey) High School for the past 23 years. Now president of the Parsippany-Troy Hills Education Association, he's also served as his local Association's vice president, chief contract negotiator, and salary chair.

As school boards now operate, public education would be better served by replacing them with district-appointed boards of administrators and teachers.

Few board members have expertise in education. The only qualifications required for board service are a high school education and taxpayer status. If school boards must remain, let's establish some standards. Teachers need certain qualifications, why not board members?

At the very least, board members should have experience handling large budgets and be well versed on classroom life. It wouldn't be a bad idea to have members serve a school internship. Maybe they should take a competency test, too.

It's been my experience that most board members view teachers as the enemy. Individually, they may visit our classrooms and tell us how wonderful we are, but collectively they perceive us as a greedy group. When we bring our concerns to them, they see us as complainers. Board members should be education advocates. Often, the only time a board member seems to defend schools is for personal political advantage.

Teachers have become the whipping post for education. Most schools are doing a fine job, but we educators take the heat for the few that aren't. Boards need to tell critics that this is a wrong perception about their schools.

Another problem: boards involve themselves too much in the personal affairs of others. They've never gotten away from the mentality of the 1880s when townfolk told the schoolmarm what to do. This makes it difficult for board members to get on to other issues.

In my district, for example, the board rejected a proposal for all-day kindergarten. The reason? Most of the members said they knew in their hearts that it was right for women to stay home with their kids. Apparently, they have no comprehension of changing family structures.

Many of the beliefs board members hold are archaic. They think any time that teachers don't spend in the classroom is free time—and they should fill it up with extra duties. They see no problem with having us come in during the summer to set up our classrooms, or with requiring us to take summer courses.

Board members like to talk about education in terms of productivity. But it's not valid to compare running a public school to running a business: We deal with students, not products. Unlike businesses or private schools, we can't choose our raw materials. We have to deal with everyone who comes to us.

For boards, saving money takes precedence over quality education. They usually cut programs where the least amount of noise will be made, or make illogical decisions. Recently, to meet the need for elementary school guidance counselors, my board simply reassigned secondary school counselors.

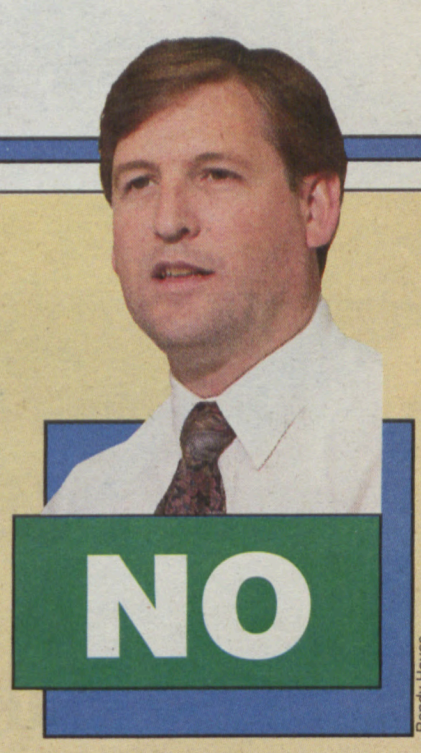
I love the paradox that says we need to raise teacher salaries to recruit quality persons into the profession, but then at contract time we're told there's not enough money to give us a raise. And that our salaries are too high, anyway.

Rock stars and athletes don't hear that—and boards have no problem sending the message that teachers are more important than musicians or sports figures. Don't we deserve more money?

What does this say to kids? That they shouldn't push themselves very hard? That if we're so smart, why are we teaching? It certainly doesn't make kids respect us any more.

For board members, education is only a part of their lives. They have their full-time jobs and their lives go on as usual when board meetings adjourn. Yet these people are handling large budgets—in my district, $67 million—a responsibility that's difficult at best on a part-time basis. Doctors and lawyers don't allow lay people to control their professions. We shouldn't either.

Setting public school policy and administering the district budget is simply too important to be left to people with only a superficial knowledge of schools and an axe to grind. Either they should get the necessary training or they should be replaced by a policy-making board of administrators and teachers.



NO

Randy Hayes

Rodger Barlow, a 17-year teaching veteran in Idaho Falls, Idaho, teaches fifth grade at A.H. Bush Elementary. A member of the Idaho Falls Education Association, he's served on the Idaho Education Association board of directors. He's now a member of IFEA's negotiating team.

Earlier in my teaching career, I couldn't identify any of my district's school board members, nor did I trust them. Then, after many years as an Association activist, I decided to try life on the other side of the table: I ran for and was elected to my school board.

I quickly learned how time consuming a school board position is. There are mountains of material that board members must read, understand, and vote on—usually within a one-week time frame. Although my tasks as a board member sometimes seemed physically impossible, I slowly learned the background of issues and routine procedures necessary to run a district.

While on the board, I constantly ran into community members and district employees who felt a certain procedure or issue should have been handled differently. Although I couldn't always explain each decision—because of confidentiality or an involved history—I did assure them that we made our decisions based on the information presented to us.

My years on the school board convinced me that boards play a vital role in the educational system.

Still, the very fact that this debate appears, suggests that a better governing system might exist. Two of the latest school management alternatives are site-based management and site-based decision making.

I've participated in site-based management, where the staff and parents have a limited voice in a school's operation—for example, when to schedule certain events, which equipment to purchase, what inservices to offer. But most budget decisions are still made by the principal, who has the authority to run the school and represent those who live within its boundaries. The principal, in turn, is accountable to the superintendent and the school board.

In contrast, site-based decision making involves a building-level group—usually including the principal, teachers, and parents—that makes all decisions concerning the school, without having to get approval from the superintendent or school board. The group establishes curriculum, spends money, and makes all the decisions normally made by a school board or administrators.

Both site-based management and site-based decision making are valuable, but research leads me to believe that no state is going to do away with school boards.

Running a school district involves much more than tending to the needs of just one school—and somebody has to be in charge to handle problems and concerns, to be accountable.

If there were no school boards, who would handle district financial matters? Local school communities most likely wouldn't be well acquainted with legal guidelines and would find it difficult to keep abreast of all state and federal changes. On the other hand, a school board hires attorneys, accountants, and business managers to keep its members informed.

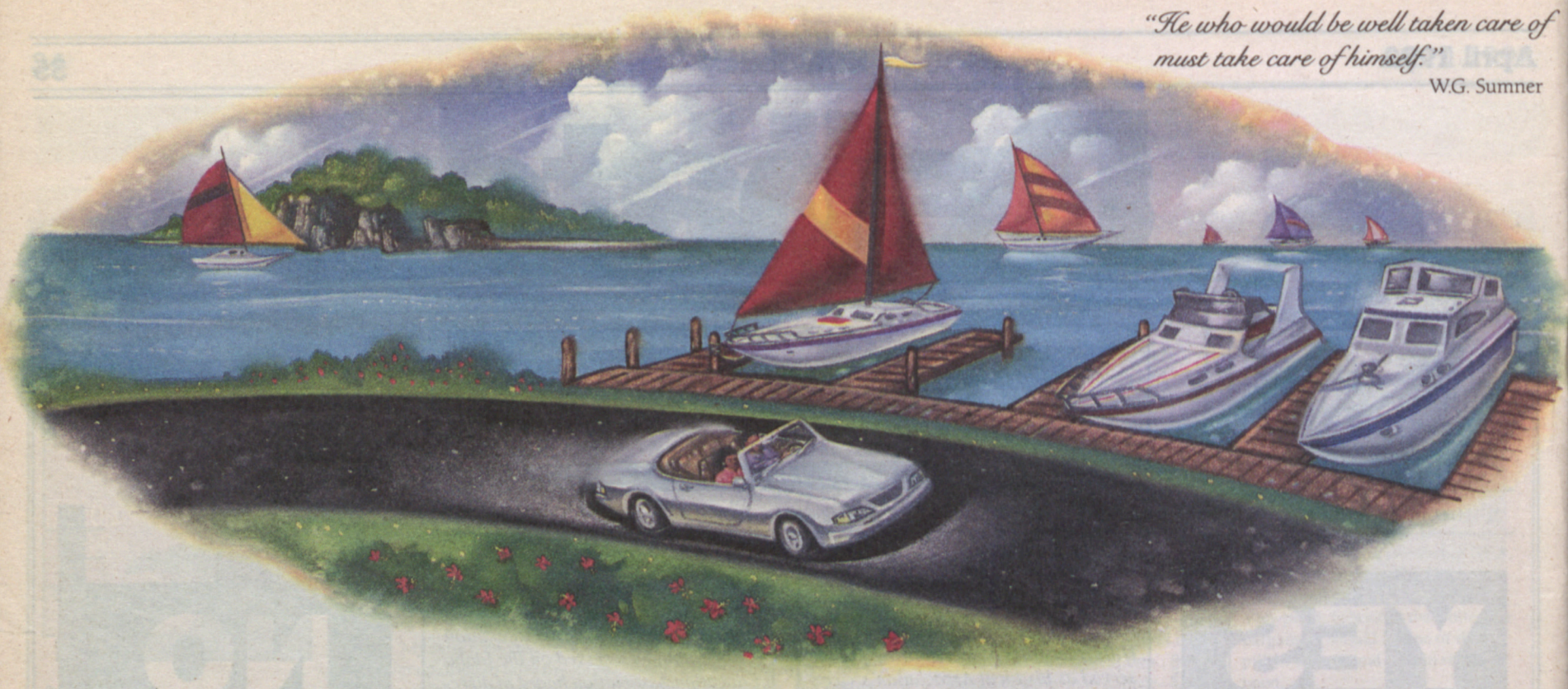
And while a building-level group can make decisions on matters that directly affect it—like student discipline, grading, and attendance—without a school board to set district policies and guidelines, there's a good chance it would make some illegal decisions.

Who other than school board members should bear the tremendous responsibility of negotiating property purchases and employee contracts, placing a teacher on probation, or expelling a student? Who better than a school board should be authorized to handle sensitive, confidential, and legal issues involving the various schools, the district itself, and persons within the educational system?

If volunteers replaced elected board members, the school community would soon be in chaos. With volunteers running the district, narrow views would probably take precedence over consideration of everyone's needs.

It's true that school board members sometimes want to implement their personal agendas. But overall, board members are held accountable by the community. In the end, a community wants those running its school district to consider the whole education picture. Only a school board can provide that broad view.

"He who would be well taken care of must take care of himself."
W.G. Sumner



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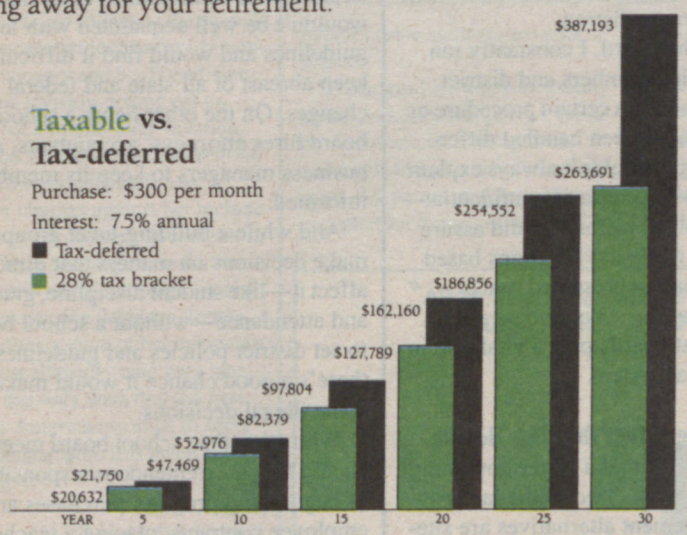

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